

EMOTIONS

Talking about emotions can be hard and your child may be resistant; try uses the following phrases;

- “ I wonder if it feels too scary (painful, worrying) for you to tell me any more right now”
- I think it’s hard for you to remember how sad you were when....., I wonder what might make it easier for you?

Always offer a comeback clause; e.g. tomorrow or after lunch.

When observing try not to put your own interpretation on how a child is feeling eg you weren’t playing with anyone, you must be sad. Try- “I notice you weren’t playing with anyone today, how are you feeling?”

Always try to validate a child feelings; telling them you understand doesn’t mean you are condoning or agreeing.

No feeling is bad in itself, only if the consequences are detrimental to another’s happiness.

EMPATHY

Empathy is the most social of feelings; needed to build relationships. To try and encourage this feeling try using the following openers;

- “Imagine that happened to you.....”
- “How would you feel if

- “what made them so angry/frustrated?”
- “What do you think they were feeling before they did/said that?”
- “I imagine it really hurts your feelings when.....”
- (When playing) “Dolly is tired, shall we put her to bed?”
- “that’s great, you must be really pleased?”

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

- Exaggerate all gestures and expressions
- Keep message in face, voice and words the same, eg. Look cross, sound cross and say cross.
- Use a mirror to practise faces
- Use video modelling/ role play
- Use a project book or display to show opposites and emotional change eg “When I was little I used to feel(scared/suspicious), now I am bigger I feel(brave and trusting)
- Say “look at Daddy’s face” and tell what the expression is

- Alleviate boredom, with physical movement, meditation etc
- Boundaries can make a child feel emotionally safe.
- Create a visual mood barometer, temp scale, engine running, balloon inflating or 5 point scale
- Use comic strip conversations, drawing, writing, role play, video or puppets to allow child to express feelings.
- Create an emotions book or an alphabet of feelings
- Play emotion charades ; act out expressions like “over the moon”
- Play songs, eg Proud by Heather Small, Shout by Tears for Fears, If your happy and you know it.
- Have a handy hints box for ideas for random acts of kindness
- Have a handy hints box for ideas on how to calm down/chill

Most importantly remember the aim is ‘good enough parenting’ not perfection. Aim for high warmth and low criticism; catch them being good and remember you can apologise if you make a mistake.