
Week 1: Role of emotions, “I” messages and empathy

Caregiver’s emotions

Escalates conflict
Scares or worries the child
 Defense mechanism: to play
 Fear of the messenger
May reward the child
Caregiver’s tendency to overreact
Poor modeling for handling frustration
Putting up barriers
Teaches children to win through power
It is OK to be angry, frustrated and upset in parenting

Natural part of social relationships
Closeness of this relationship
Can be beneficial as children need to learn about emotions
Moderate levels
Short-term
Resolution

Ways to calm and “I” messages

Accept the situation
Focus on solutions
Own your emotions
Provide “I” messages

 Provide your own feelings, give behavior focused blame [*Example: “I am angry my lamp is broken. I am frustrated, people are running in the house.”*]

Avoid “you” messages

 Defensive listener, invites arguments
 Often “I” messages are given for other children’s emotions

Example: A teacher might say, “Suzie is angry, her flashlight is broken.”

PARENT PRACTICE

- While playing with a friend, your four year-old runs through the living room and knocks over your toddler. You had repeatedly told the children to stop running in the house.
- Your older child is pinching your younger child to have him let go of a block.
- Your five year-old sneaks out of the house to a neighbor’s yard. It takes you several panicked minutes to find him.

Children's negative emotions

Be approachable – get comfortable with emotions

Avoid denying emotions

Avoid questioning unless it works – window may be 3 to 10 year s old

Provide empathy – acknowledge emotion and why they might feel that way

Empathy

Summarizing requires you to really attend

Match intensity

You are not trying to rescue them or change their feelings

It's hardest to be empathetic with expressions of anger – empathy first then the discipline

Provide empathy even when emotion is expressed at you or at siblings

Empathy through storytelling [Self, other or hypothetical]

Empathy through wants and wishes

PARENT PRACTICE

- Your two year old is crying hard because someone knocked over his block tower. This was his second attempt, the first fell over.
- Your three year old is stomping her foot and glaring at her older sister. The older sister is holding a doll out of reach. The younger one screams, "I had that!"
- Your six year old comes home from a friend's house. She seems on the verge of tears. She says there were lots of friends there and they wouldn't play what she wanted to play. She says nobody would listen to her. She had the friend's mother walk her home.

HOMEWORK

Recognize your own emotions and their impact in the discipline exchange

Accept the situation and focus on solutions

Own your emotions

Provide "I" messages

Label emotions

Provide passive or global blame

Avoid "you" messages

Offer empathetic responses to the child's emotions every time

Provide empathy language

Recognize emotions and why they might feel that way

Also empathy through story telling or wants and wishes