

Are you Listening? - Cut it Out!

How we connect with our kids is one of the most important parts of parenting. That means we need to communicate effectively. If we are using a lot of *listening don'ts*, we need to CUT IT OUT!

Children want to know two very important things; that we can accept their feelings and that we understand them. Body language says a lot and reflecting a child's feelings can often calm their behaviour. Behaviour is communication so don't wait for words.

Too often we *dismiss, minimize or belittle* the feelings of a child. "What do you mean you didn't enjoy the birthday party, there were so many nice kids and treats"? We can also *judge* the feelings that our kids have, "You shouldn't be so negative about school, why don't you improve your attitude?" Sometimes we even tell our children how to feel. "Of course you aren't mad at your sister, she just wants to be your friend."

Perhaps the most common listening "no no" is advice giving. "Well why don't you invite Susan over and try to make friends with her?" Yes, as parents, we have great ideas but our kids often have better ones when it comes to their life, even if they are three! We can't fix our children's life experiences but we can listen and give them empathy.

Grab your feeling chart and try reflecting feelings. "It sounds like you felt overwhelmed at the party,

there were so many kids and so much noise." - "It sounds like your day at school was really frustrating." or state the content back, "Your sister got in to all your models and pulled them apart!" - Try not to solve the problem just reflect, "It sounds like you felt really sad when Susan ignored you today."

A sincere desire to understand your child can go such a long way. You may not get it right the first time but your child will guide you.

Listening Tools

Don't:

- **minimize, dismiss or belittle your child's feelings**
- **judge your child's feelings**
- **tell children how they should feel**
- **advice give**
- **lecture, moralize and give logical arguments**

Do:

- **pay attention**
- **reflect feelings**
- **repeat the content in your own words**
- **give your child empathy**

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Are you feeling.....angry, annoyed, anxious, apprehensive, bored, concerned, confused, disappointed, discouraged, disgusted, embarrassed, exhausted, frightened, frustrated, furious, guilty, hurt, impatient, irritated, jealous, lonely, mad, miserable, nervous, overwhelmed, panicky, reluctant, restless, scared, shocked, sleepy, sorry, surprised, suspicious, uncomfortable, unhappy, upset, worried ?

