****Tips For Using Emotion Coaching Skills**

5 Steps to emotion coaching

1. Become aware of your child’s emotions.
2. View their emotions as an opportunity to connect and teach.
3. Listen and accept their emotions and avoid judgement.
4. Help your child to describe how they feel and reflect back by labelling the emotions.
5. Avoid jumping in to problem solving too quickly. Instead, help them feel validated for what they are going through first before trying to find solutions

Reflective listening: is listening attentively and then paraphrasing what you heard and reflecting on the emotion your child is coming to you with. This includes:

* Our first urge is to react to the content of what our child is telling us and then to problem solve. But before you respond to the content and before problem solving, ask yourself what is the emotion/feeling behind the content are they coming with, and connect with that - this helps your child feel heard and validated – you’re able to make a connection and it also promotes further communication that will help you better understand what’s going on for them
* Showing acceptance for whatever emotions arise giving them praise for sharing emotion,
* Tuning in to and exploring the emotions
* Being sure to show you are listening even when they are not wanting to talk a lot.
* In order to be present. Sometimes it’s best to say nothing and just *be with them*
* Allow your child to lead the discussion - your role is to reflect and validate
* Avoid asking lots of questions - this can be really hard as our first response is usually to explore and ask questions. Is important when you find yourself behaving this way: stop, breath, pause and wait. Let them know that you can see they’re having a difficult time and remained non-judgemental.

Helpful hints:

* Notice how you think your child is feeling and considered how you might feel in a similar situation. The key is to remain connected with the emotion.
* Clarify with a question *“You look worried/disappointed/pleased…, did I get that right?”.*
* One way to show acceptance is just sitting with them until they find the words to talk about what’s going on. This conveys that you’re there for them.
* Avoid asking lots of questions especially asking “why?” While your child is distressed their prefrontal cortex responsible for our executive functioning, has shut down and it’s very difficult for them to answer questions. It’s also not what they need. Help your child regulate through co-regulation and soothing / calming strategies
* Our second urge is to jump in to problem solving. This doesn’t help our child notice, label, and learn to understand and normalise their own feelings.
* Also avoid making judgements and giving advice
* Use validating comments, such as *“how disappointing that must be for you” or “I imagine that must be really tough for you?”.* That shows you understand.
* Reflect back that you have heard and most importantly reflect how you think they might be feeling –
* that must be difficult
* you look a bit worried
* You seem very pleased
* I bet that made you feel pretty annoyed

Things to avoid:

* Talking a lot is not helpful. It’s ok to stay silent until an opportunity arises where you can show your listening
* Making judgements or giving advice too quickly
* Asking lots of questions
* Jumping to problem solving too quickly
* Dismissive comments e.g., *“there is nothing to be scared of”* or *“you shouldn’t worry about that”*
* Sharing your own reaction or past reactions/experiences as a rule, as this can just distract from their communication with you. Stay with their feelings, their story and their own solutions.