



Teaching Children About Feelings

Just as children need to learn how to control their bodies and to understand language, they must learn how to recognize and express feelings. We often take for granted our ability to identify feelings in and overlook our role in helping children develop their emotional intelligence. Understanding our feelings and the feelings of others lays the foundation for healthy relationships and spiritual development.

Here are three simple ways to help children learn how to identify and express feelings!

1. Model listening skills:

Practice active listening with your children. Ask them about their feelings and help them to identify what their feelings are and why they feel them, even if you disagree with those feelings.

Instead of:

'Don't be angry at me because we can't go to the park, I can't control the weather!'

Try:

'Tell me why you're feeling angry.'

Remember basic listening skills:

- Stop what you are doing so that you can listen.
- Get at the child's level and look at him/her.
- Show that you are listening.
- Repeat back what you hear to see if you understand.

Good listeners are not giving advice...they are seeking to understand!

2. Explain how you identify feelings in others, and acknowledge the emotions of your child:

When you recognize your child's feelings, let them know how you are interpreting their body language and behavior.

Instead of:

'I'm sorry we can't go to the park today; we can go another day.'

Try:

'I notice you are crossing your arms and turning away from me; are you are feeling angry?'

3. Show and tell your children how you feel:

It is important for children to learn how to interpret your body language and to develop an emotional vocabulary. Use specific words to describe your emotions and relate them to your body language or to the cause of your feelings.

Instead of:

'Its raining, we won't be able to go to the park today.'

Try:

'Rats! (stomp your foot). I feel so disappointed it is raining today! I was really looking forward to going to the park together.'

Each time that you listen to a child, acknowledge his/her feelings, or explain your own feelings, you help boost his/her emotional IQ!



