

STEP BY STEP



TO EFFECTIVE PARENTING

COMMUNICATION-FEELINGS

By Ruby M. Johnston

About Step by Step

Parenting is both an exciting and challenging journey. Having a child to love, nurture, and encourage is a blessing. However the journey is filled with challenges which are sometimes puzzling and at other times frustrating. This booklet and others in the series are designed to help you sort through the steps in helping a child grow and develop to reach her fullest potential.

Each booklet contains core information on parenting attitudes, skills and abilities. There are activities to work through to help in applying each strategy. While the booklets contain information which can lead to more effective parenting, it may not answer all the questions a parent might have in the area presented. It is therefore recommended that each and every parent join the thousands of other parents in the journey for lifelong learning. Parenting is a step by step learning process.

We invite you to read all our titles and join us in one of our many different training sessions. We look forward to walking together with you step by step to effective parenting!

Sincerely,

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COMMUNICATION-IDENTIFYING AND NAMING FEELINGS

Children learn what they live. You have probably heard this before- and it's true! Parents can be great models for children to learn many things, including how to communicate effectively. Effective communication occurs when both people involved know they are being understood.

It is not always easy for children to communicate feelings. Sometimes children do not always have the vocabulary to express what they are feeling. Sometimes parents do not know how to assist their children in expressing their feelings. And sometimes parents do not know how to make sure they properly understand what the children are feeling.

The goal of this guide is to provide strategies for you, the parent, to identify and understand your child's feelings. These are effective methods that allow for correction and confirmation to ensure understanding.

The next few pages of this guide contain the following:

- A list of active listening skills.
- A description of Reflecting Feelings.
- Practice activities for identifying and reflecting feelings.
- Additional STEP-BY-STEP topics and titles.



ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS WE WANT TO USE

Active listening is made up of many skills and abilities. These skills communicate to the child you care what they are saying, that you care about them and you want to talk to them. For this reason, they are sometimes called attending skills or caring skills.

A sample of these skills are:

- Reflecting Feelings
- Paraphrasing
- Eye Contact
- Full Attention
- Praising
- Giving Feedback
- Being Quiet



REFLECTING FEELINGS

One of the most important skills is Reflecting Feelings. Many times children have difficulty expressing their feelings. We can help them by attempting to understand what they are feeling and expressing that in words. This is what is known as Reflecting Feelings.

Reflecting Feelings achieves at least three major parenting accomplishments. First, it helps you, as a parent, put yourself in your child's place. In order to accurately reflect feelings, you must be able to see situations from his or her point of view. For most of us, it's been a long time since we were children, so it takes work and practice to understand a child's feelings again.

The second accomplishment of reflecting feelings is that it opens up communication between you and your child. Reflecting feelings communicates to your child that you care enough to try to understand his feelings. It tells your child that his feelings are important to you. When children know you care, they are more likely to share their thoughts and feelings with you.

Finally, reflecting feelings helps your child learn how to appropriately and effectively express his feelings. Oftentimes, children do not know how to put their feelings into words, or they just do not have the vocabulary to express what they are feeling. This can result in "acting out" their feelings. This can be difficult and inappropriate behavior, such as a temper tantrum. It may also be an appropriate and appreciated gesture, such as an unexpected hug. In either case, the feelings behind them may remain unclear. As you reflect feelings with your child, you are demonstrating good communication techniques.



REFLECTING FEELINGS THROUGH QUESTIONS

An effective strategy to assist in understanding a child's feelings is to ask questions. Asking questions about feelings helps to discover exactly what the child is feeling. For example, "Are you feeling sad about losing your favorite hat?" By asking a question, you offer your child the opportunity to agree or disagree. If he disagrees, you can ask another question or simply ask what he might be feeling. If he agrees, you have joined with him and have validated him and his feelings.



PRACTICE TIME: REFLECTING FEELINGS QUESTIONS

In each of the two situations, think of what a child may be feeling and write down a question for the child. This question should include a feeling appropriate to the situation and should be expressed in a way which allows the child to respond by confirming or disagreeing with the feeling you have chosen.

Situation 1: Your child is crying as he tells you his teacher told him he must do his homework assignment over again.

Situation 2: Your child just came into room, laughing, smiling and even giggling about the bicycle ride she just took for the first time.

Did you write something like this?

Situation 1: "Are you discouraged about having to do your homework again?"

Situation 2: "Wow, you seem so excited and happy! Is that how you feel?"

It is sometimes hard to identify feelings that a child is experiencing; however, when we attempt to do so, we are also helping them to do the same. Let's look at some situations and try to determine what possible feelings the children might be experiencing.

1. Andre, 10, comes running into the kitchen and shouting that he made the soccer team.

Possible feelings:

2. Lena, 12, is staring at a book in her lap and is crying.

Possible feelings: _____

3. Peter, 16, is complaining he cannot buy the music he wants because he does not have enough money.

Possible feelings:

4. Sergae, 14, is not eating his dinner. He is just pushing his food around his plate with his fork.

Possible feelings:

5. Sarah, 10, comes home after seeing her best friend leave for camp for the summer. She has her head bowed and seems to be crying.

Possible feelings: _____

Did you suggest any of these feelings?

1. Andre: happy, pleased, excited
2. Lena: frustrated, sad, discouraged
3. Peter: inadequate, resentful, embarrassed
4. Sergae: bothered, bored, tired
5. Sarah: lonely, hurt, discouraged

It is important to realize that there are not any right or wrong answers. It is a process of discovery and joining with the child, understanding him and communicating that you care about him.



FINAL STEP

Children are our most important resource and asset. We want to build them up, encourage them and help them to feel CAPABLE, LOVABLE, RESPONSIBLE and WORTHWHILE. As we use many different strategies to do this, communication is one of them most important.

If we commit to listening to our child and responding effectively, we not only build our relationship, we teach the child what it is like to communicate as an adult in an adult world. We model for them to learn! What a wonderful gift we have been given and we give!

In the mean time, practice and KEEP LISTENING!!!!

OTHER STEP BY STEP TITLES WITH NUMBERS

1. Understanding Child Development – Birth to Two – “The Infant”
2. Understanding Child Development – Three to Five – “The Preschooler”
3. Understanding Child Development – Six to Eleven – “The School Aged Child”
4. Understanding Child Development – Twelve to Fifteen – “The Young Teen”
5. Understanding Child Development – Sixteen to Eighteen – “The Older Teen”
6. Communication – Responding to Children
7. Communication – Feelings
8. Communication – Asking Children Strength- Focused Questions
9. Communication – Being Direct with Children
10. Communication - The Languages of Love for Your Child
11. Communication – What you Say and How you Say It
12. What Every Parent Should Know About Child Abuse
13. Sharing Secrets and Keeping Surprises – James’s Story
14. Teaching Your Child to Say, “NO” – Jessica’s Story
15. Understanding Childhood Illnesses
16. Caring for a Sick Child
17. Disease and How it Spreads
18. First Aid – What Parents Need to Know
19. Home Safety
20. Childproofing Your Home
21. Teaching Safety
22. Food Safety
23. Foodborn Illness
24. Nutrition
25. Feeding Problems
26. Bringing a Foster Child Into Your Home
27. Understanding the Effects of Fostering on the Family
28. Understanding the Effects of Fostering on the Marriage
29. Guide to Dealing with Stress As a Parent
30. Guide to Building a Healthy Marriage Relationship
31. Bringing our Adopted Child into Our Home
32. Helping Children Understand Adoption
33. Joining With my Adopted Child’s Culture
34. Understanding the Birth Parent of My Child
35. The Blended Family

36. When Family Members Treat My Foster or Adoptive Child Different
37. Understanding Attachment
38. Recreating History for My Adopted Child
39. Helping the Child who has been Sexually Abused
40. Teaching about Sexuality
 - a. How to Talk to Your Child
 - b. How to Talk to Your Parents
41. Understanding Sexual Behaviors
42. Teaching Your Child about Abstinence
43. Talking to your Teen about Identity
44. Contracting with Your Teen About Behavior
45. Developing Responsibility
46. Teaching Your Child to Build Relationships
47. Teaching about Marriage and Family
48. Telling Your Child Someone has Died
49. Understanding the Grieving Cycle
50. Understanding and Approaching Behavior
51. Dealing with Lying
52. Toilet Training and Bedwetting
53. Dealing with Defiance
54. Dealing with Hitting and Biting
55. Dealing with Stealing
56. Dealing with Anger
57. Dealing with Fighting
58. The Child Who Plays With Fire
59. Helping My Child Deal with Fear
60. Helping My Child Kick a Bad Habit
61. Help with Tattling
62. Dealing with the Two Year Old's Temper Tantrum
63. Help with Thumb Sucking
64. Help with Bedtime Problems
65. Dealing with Substance Abuse
66. Understanding Suicide
67. Developing Good Study Habits for School
68. Dealing with Failure
69. Demonstrating Manners
70. Helping Siblings Get Along
71. Nurturing Optimism

MORE TITLES TO BE DEVELOPED IN THE FUTURE

