

Active Listening

"Think big ears, small mouths!"

Sometimes it's difficult to know what to say to a child who is struggling with their emotions. We often have opinions about what the child is saying, we might want to jump in and rescue the situation, we might find the emotions of the child intolerable and make it all better for them or we might want to problem solve. All of these responses are led by us and our agenda. In thinking about what we want or need to do, we distract ourselves from truly listening to the child. Active listening is the process of listening attentively while withholding judgement or advice

Active Listening involves the following features:

- Eye contact
- Open body language
- Matching affect
- Being non-judgemental
- Avoid making assumptions eg "that must have been....." "mum must have felt...."
- LISTENING



- Think listening not talking. You are the vessel for the child's information
- In moments of silence if you want to say something, you might say:
 - "I hear you"
 - "I'm listening"
- You might want to reflect back something the child has said
Eg The child might say "I'm so angry" and you would say "you're telling me you're angry"
- You might summarise



Eg "you've told me that (this happened, then this happened, then this happened)"

- You can acknowledge how the child appears to feel in the moment
Eg "you look sad"
Avoid comments about how the child felt at the time as this is an assumption and may not be fact
- Document discussions with the child, behaviours / play / drawings you observe to be concerning,