

Supporting Children with Their Feelings

Dos and Don'ts



Do



- Stop what you are doing and listen to what they are saying
- Acknowledge and validate their feelings "I hear you" "it's tough feeling like that"
- Ensure the child is safe
- Give them space to talk to you about how they feel
- Ask open questions "tell me more about that." "what happened?"
- If they can't find the language or don't know how to interpret their feelings, say something to reflect what you think might be going on for them like, "other young people can feel frustrated when they are bored....is that how you feel?"
- Allow them to sit with the feeling
- Reassure them that you are there with them "let's sit this one out together"
- Offer a hug
- Show them that you can tolerate their feelings
- Give them time
- Ask them what they need from you while they feel like this "I'm here to help, is there anything I can do to help"



- Reassure them that feelings pass

When you observe a shift in their mood:

- Offer to help them problem solve if this is necessary
- Offer some ideas to support them to cope with difficult feelings eg deep breathing, mindfulness,
- Create a plan with the child that will support them when they feel like this in the future

DON'T



- Dismiss how they feel
- Interrupt them when they are telling you how they feel
- Argue with the child
- Make statements like "pull yourself together" "don't be silly" "don't you think you're being a bit dramatic"
- Try to make them feel something different "cheer up"
- Tell them how they should feel
- Rush them
- Expect them to think clearly at the height of distress
- Expect them to "get on with it"
- Jump to try and fix it – this can give the impression that you can't tolerate their feelings