

9 ways to show *empathy* when your child is struggling

Your actions can build motivation, self-esteem, and trust.



When your child misbehaves or has trouble in school, it's not easy to be empathetic. Here are nine ways to show you care and respect your child's feelings as you navigate the conversation.

1 Use the “Platinum Rule,” not the “Golden Rule.”

You may have heard of the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you'd like them to treat you. But empathy relies on the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they want (and need) to be treated.

This rule means you take your child's feelings into account when you try to help. It puts the focus on understanding what your child really needs from you — instead of what you'd need if you were struggling.

2 Don't just assume. Ask.

Kids often give nonverbal cues about how they're feeling. While it's important to be sensitive to those cues, it's just as important to ask about

what your child is feeling. Giving kids a chance to explain their point of view helps them feel heard — and involved in finding solutions.

3 Set aside frustrations and judgment.

When your child tells you about a tough situation at school, put aside your reaction and let your child's reaction come first.

4 Use “I” statements.

“You” statements can make kids feel defensive and not want to listen. “I” statements let you talk about situations without placing blame. For example: “I know you're upset. But when you yell and talk over me, I feel like you aren't hearing what I'm saying.”

Continued

MORE WAYS TO CONNECT

.....
Learn how to get your child to talk with you about school.



.....
Check out 12 movies that can help build empathy.



.....
Get tips on talking with kids about strengths and challenges.



GE APPLIANCES
a Haier company

5 Don't jump into fix-it mode.

Try to just listen and understand what's wrong. Your child might not want you to fix a problem. That's something you can talk about after you hear your child out.

6 Take a time-out.

It's hard to keep your cool when kids take their frustration out on you. It's OK to tell your child that you need to step away. Say something like, "I'm finding it hard not to yell, and it seems like you are, too. I think we both need to take some time to cool down. I'll be back when I'm calmer and better able to listen."

7 Ask open-ended questions.

Let kids say what's on their mind without feeling like you've already sized up the situation. For example, ask "What about today was hard for you?" It helps you explore the problem—and solutions—in more depth.

8 Actively listen.

Give your full attention and listen to the words and tone of voice. When you actively listen, you think through and repeat in your own words what you think your child said. For example, ask, "Is this what you're telling me?" Then repeat what you think you heard. That gives kids a chance to correct misunderstandings.

9 Validate your child's feelings.

When you empathize, you show kids they have the right to feel the way they feel. You may not agree with your child's choices. You may even think your child is overreacting. But it's important to recognize that your child's feelings are valid.



Give your full attention and listen to the words and tone of voice. When you actively listen, you think through and repeat in your own words what you think your child said.