



# **EMOTIONS MATTER**

## **HOW TO LISTEN SO KIDS WILL TALK**

- Benefits of emotion coaching & acknowledging feelings
- How to reflectively listen
- Examples of reflective listening/ emotion coaching
- Emotions
- Sentence starters
- Further reading

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Dear all,

Thank you so much for attending our webinar. Educating Matters truly believe in empowering parents with resources and information that will benefit families. We know that you are your child's first and most important teacher.

Remember that you are the expert on your family and your children. The interventions and resources we are offering are a guide from which you can pick and choose what works best for your unique set of circumstances. Do not feel pressure to do everything we suggest. Work as a family to choose what works and feel free to pass on the rest.

As a mother of 4, I know for a fact that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' parent. Be kind to yourself and each other. Remember who you are and do the best you can. We are not going for 100% here.

Of course, it would be great if you could share what we discussed with your partners or whoever else helps you with raising your children.

If you are not a parent, these ideas are equally applicable to all age groups and relationships, be that extended family, partners, friends or work colleagues. Everyone wants to feel heard and understood.

For further support, you can [sign up to our newsletter](#) and get further ideas by looking at the blog on our website [www.educatingmatters.co.uk/blog](http://www.educatingmatters.co.uk/blog)

Or follow me on [LinkedIn under Rachel Vecht](#).

I run a more extended [group parenting course](#) remotely that you can join at any time and our team of experts can provide 1:1 consultations on any issue relating to parenting or education.

Stay healthy and safe.

Kind Regards

Rachel Vecht



## **THE LINK BETWEEN EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR**

“The ability of a human being to manage his/her emotions in a healthy way will determine the quality of his life in a much more fundamental way than his/her IQ.”

### **Dr Laura Markham**

All behaviour is caused. Assume there is a valid reason for the misbehaviour. It could be a need for:

More attention

More structure

More sleep

Better diet, exercise

More independence, responsibility

All feelings are permissible but not all behaviour is permissible. It is the parent who determines what behaviour is permissible.

If a child is angry, upset or disappointed when parents lecture, justify, explain, admonish, nag, shout, threaten, criticise, repeat, remind..... It doesn't work!!!!

Address the root of the cause rather than reacting to the behaviour. Children just feel worse, their behaviour becomes more unacceptable and leads to a downward spiral of anger and misbehaviour.

Children can't respond to logic or reason until they are in a calm state

## **BENEFITS OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING**

- It shows children we care about their feelings
- Children feel heard and understood
- Reduces misbehaviour
- Increases resilience
- Teaches children how to express their feeling and develop 'emotional intelligence'
- Helps with problem solving
- Increases self-esteem
- Reduces battles

## **HOW TO REFLECTIVELY LISTEN**

- **Stop, Drop & Breathe: Put your own emotions and wishes to one side**  
This is the hardest part but parents need to be calm as our feelings cloud our judgement and make us react impulsively.
- **Stop what you are doing, look and listen**  
Look at body language, tone of voice, gestures, posture, facial expressions. Make listening noises, eye contact.
- **Imagine how your child is feeling and reflect back to them in words**  
It sounds like..... Maybe you feel....  
Take an educated guess and child feels respected and listened to.
- **Describe their resistance**  
'I bet you wish you didn't have to go to school today'  
It doesn't mean parent has to give in but reduces resistance from the child.
- **Give their wishes in fantasy (optional extra)**  
This helps to make the situation light and fun.
- **Problem solve**  
Final step after emotions understood and accepted.

## **EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING**

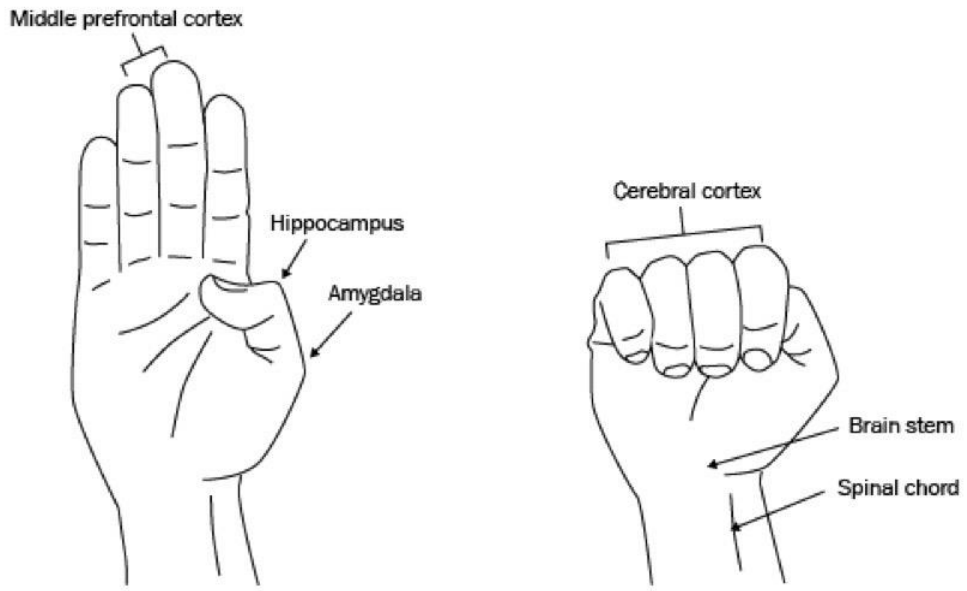
- It seems like you are sad, maybe you are worried that you won't be chosen for the team.
- It's hard to do your homework after a long day at school. I bet all you want to do is carry on playing on your iPad.
- Wouldn't it be great if you had a magic essay writing pen that you could hover over the page and a perfect story would just appear.
- Don't you wish vegetables were really unhealthy and sweets were good for you.
- I can see you're feeling cross. The new rule probably feels awful.
- You sound so frustrated. Maybe you think you will never be able to do these sums by yourself.
- It sounds like you don't want to go to school tomorrow as you are worried that Sarah will ignore you. I'd feel terrible if my friends did that to me.
- It is sad that daddy had to leave without you. I know you really wanted to go with him.
- It is really hard to try something new when you are worried about making a mistake. You may be worried that you will look silly if you get it wrong.
- I can remember when I was a child being really cross with my mum when she wouldn't let me have my ears pierced and most of my friends had theirs done.
- Maybe it feels like people are telling you what to do all day and you want to choose exactly what happens.
- It is hard to start tidying up when you are in the middle of playing and you are really enjoying yourself. Sometimes tidying up can be boring. I would much rather sit and watch TV than cook dinner for everyone.
- I bet you wish you could be left alone to do whatever you want rather than having to go to school and work.
- It looks like you're feeling jealous because at the moment I am spending a lot of time with Max helping him to prepare for his exams.
- I can understand that you are a bit worried about starting a new school. Maybe you are wondering what the teachers will be like and if you will make new friends.
- I know you hate it when you can't choose what you want to wear. You are showing me how furious you are by slamming the door.
- I know you find it irritating when you have a play date and your little sisters keep interfering. Let's find a solution so they stop disturbing you.
- I can tell by the expression on your face that you feel very disappointed. That is not the answer you were hoping for.



## **SENTENCE STARTERS**

- It looks like...
- Maybe you're feeling
- Is it possible that...
- I imagine that you might be feeling...
- It can feel...when you....
- It seems to me like....
- It reminds me when I was little and....
- The last time I saw you like this .....
- You may feel.....
- I wonder if you....
- Something doesn't seem right....
- Your behaviour/mood tells me that...
- You look as if you're feeling....
- I've noticed that you often feel....when....
- Sometimes....cn make you feel....
- Your face tells me that.....
- My guess is that....
- It seems as if you are trying to show me that you are angry.





*Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel*

## Conversation starters by Dr Laura Markham

### Getting to Know Your Child

- What are the three most interesting things about you?
- Name five reasons you're glad to be alive.
- If you could have any super power, what would it be and why?
- If you had a time machine for a day, what would you do with it?
- What's your favorite song? Why?
- What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?
- What's your favorite movie? Why?
- Why do you think kids put rings in their eyebrows and noses and bellybuttons?
- How about tattoos?
- Do you think you would ever want to do that? Why or why not?
- If we could go anywhere you wanted on vacation, where would you choose? Why?
- If you could have a conversation with anyone in history, who would it be?
- What would you want to ask them?
- What is your earliest memory?
- What are you most proud of?
- If you could change one thing about your appearance, what would it be?
- If you had to choose only three words to describe yourself, what would you say?
- Is there anything about you that inspires other people in any way?
- What is your idea of an ideal day?
- Would you rather live in a castle, on a boat, or on a cloud?
- If you were invisible where would you go and what would you do?
- If you could go back in time and give your younger self advice, what would you tell yourself?
- If you could go forward in time and give your older self advice, what would you tell yourself?
- What is a quality you wish you could have more of?
- If you could ask anyone for help, who would it be and why?
- What scares you the most and why?
- What's the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?
- What one thing that you did in the past would you like to change if you could have a do-over?
- What makes you feel better when you're upset?
- What do you worry about the most?
- What things are you not great at yet that you want some day to be good at? How much do you think you would have to practice to get good at those things?
- What is your biggest goal this year?

- When do you feel the most proud of who you are?

## Your Relationship with Your Child

- What is your favorite thing about our relationship?
- What is your least favorite thing about our relationship?
- Do you feel like you could talk with me about anything at all?
- What would you be most likely to want to lie to me about? Why?
- If you got into really big trouble, how do you think I would respond?
- Is there something I can do better as your parent that I am not doing now?
- If we had a special day together what would you want to do?
- Do I ever embarrass you?
- What are the most important things I have taught you?
- If you had to choose only three words to describe me as a parent, what would you say?
- If you and I could switch places for a day, what are the first things you would do?

## Family

- How do you think your friends' families compare to ours? Are they about as close? Closer? More distant? Why do you think that?
- Do you think your friends talk to their parents?
- What do you think makes a family close?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how strict are the parents in this family? What is the ideal number?
- Is the discipline in our family fair?
- What's the best thing about our family?
- If you could change one thing about each of your parents, what would it be?
- What are the most important things your parents have taught you?
- What do you think are the most important qualities of a good parent?
- What do you think makes a happy family?
- Tell each person in the family why you're glad they're part of the family.
- How do you think our family is the same or different from other families?
- Do you want to have kids when you grow up? Why or why not?
- What kind of parent will you be?
- What are the good things about having siblings? What are the bad things?
- What is the most important thing to do to have a good relationship with a sibling?
- Do you have better or worse relationships with your sibling(s) than your friends?
- What do you like best about each of your siblings?

- Do you think you will be close to your siblings when you grow up?
- How many of your ancestors can you name and what do you know about them?
- How are you like each of your parents? How are you different?
- What is your favorite family tradition?
- What three words do you think best describe our family?

## Blended Families and Adoptive Families

- Do blended families take more work? Can they be as happy as birth families?
- Do you ever miss your dad?
- Do you think things would be different if your dad was still with us and I had never met your step-dad? How?
- Even though your step-dad is not your biological dad, you know he adores you. Do you feel close to him?
- You know, to your little sister you are completely her sister, not her stepsister. Do you feel that way, or is it different for you? Do you feel close to her?
- When you grow up, do you think you and your step-sibs will stay connected?
- Do you think it's harder for children who have been adopted than for children who weren't?
- Do you think it's a good idea for kids who were adopted to look up their birth parents? Why or why not?
- If you met your birth parents, how do you think they'd be different from us? In what way?
- If you met your birth parents, what would you want to ask them?
- If you met your birth parents, how would your life be different?

## Values & Character

- What traits do you most admire in other people?
- Did you help anyone today?
- Did you have a chance to be kind to anyone today?
- Is it hard to make the choice to be kind sometimes?
- Was anyone kind to you today?
- Is it ever okay to treat people worse because they look different than you do?
- Do you think it's okay to lie about your age to get into an Amusement Park with a cheaper ticket? Is it ever ok to lie?
- Do you think your parents ever lie?
- What kinds of lies do your friends tell their parents?
- Does it matter if a person makes a moral or immoral choice, if no one ever knows?
- Is it ever ok to cheat, in academics, sports, business?

- If someone you loved was very sick but could not afford the medicine to get better, would it be okay to steal the medicine?
- Do you think it is ever okay to share a secret that you were told in confidence? When and why?
- Everybody makes poor choices sometimes. Do you remember a time when you made a choice you later regretted? Did some part of you know that was a bad idea? What kept you from listening to that part of you? How could you support yourself to make a different choice if something similar happened again?
- Do adults automatically deserve respect? How does someone earn respect?
- Do you swear? How many of the kids at school swear? What do you think about swearing?
- What do you think the biggest problem in the world is? How about in our country?
- What could our family do that would make the world a better place?
- How important is money? Do you think there is enough money in the world for everyone to have enough?
- Is being a millionaire a worthwhile goal?
- How would you change the world if you could?
- What do you think the "take-away" message of this movie/book is?
- Do you admire the hero in this movie/book? Why or why not?
- Would you make the same choices the person in this book/movie is?

## School & Learning

- Who is or was your favorite teacher? Why?
- What do you like best about school?
- What is the hardest thing about school?
- How do you manage your homework so you can stay on top of it and feel good about it?
- Do you think there is a difference between being smart and being wise?
- What is your favorite time of the school day?
- What is the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you at school?
- What do you know how to do, that you could teach someone else?
- How common do you think cheating is at your school?
- What would you do if all the other kids were planning to cheat on the final and you knew that doing so would lower your grade?
- Do you respect your teachers? Why or why not? Do you think they respect you?
- Would you ever want to be a teacher? Why or why not?
- What do you think makes the most difference in how kids do at school? Hard work, innate ability, parental supervision, peer attitudes, how good the school is?

- Do you think it makes sense to admit students to a college based only on academic achievement or should an attempt be made to achieve racial and ethnic diversity as well?
- Do you think kids from wealthier school districts have an unfair advantage?
- What do you think about home-schooling?

## Emotions

- Do you know what EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) is? If someone has a high EQ, what are they like?
- What do you think the purpose is of the various emotions?
- When you feel a strong emotion, what is the best way to respond to it?
- How do you see me handle big emotions?
- Do you think it is okay for people to cry when they get upset? (male and female, young and old?)
- How do different emotions feel in your body?
- Are you able to tell me or others when you are upset?
- How do you feel when someone is angry with you? How do you act?
- Are you a "cup is half full" or "cup is half empty" kind of person?
- What do you do to cheer yourself up when you feel down?
- What words do you wish someone would say to you when you're having a tough time?
- Have I never not noticed when you're sad?
- What is the best way for me to help you when you feel grumpy?
- When do you like me to hug you? When does it embarrass you?
- What hurts your feelings? How do you act when your feelings are hurt?
- When you're upset, do you like me to stay close or give you some space?
- When you get really angry, how do you help yourself calm down?
- When you are really angry at me, what is the most helpful way for me to respond?
- When you make a mistake, are you able to repair things so that you end up feeling ok? What is the hardest part of repairing things?
- How do you feel when you apologize, before, during and after?
- What are the different kinds of courage? How do you define bravery?
- Do you think of yourself as brave? When you're scared, what do you do?
- What do you do when you feel so frustrated or hopeless that you want to give up?
- When you wake up in a bad mood, what strategies do you use to help yourself feel better so you can have a good day?

## Friendship & Peers

- Who do you usually sit with at lunch at school? What do you talk about?
- Who is your best friend and why?
- What traits do you look for in friends?
- Do you have friends who are different races or religions than you? Does that have any effect on the friendship?
- Do you think you're good at making friends?
- How do you work things out with a friend when you have a disagreement?
- Where do you consider yourself on the shy to outgoing continuum?
- Have you ever been mad at one of your friends? How did you handle it?
- Do you think there is a such thing as peer pressure? Do you ever feel peer pressure? Do you think some people are more susceptible to peer pressure than others? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think makes a person popular? Are wealthier kids more popular? Kids who mature faster?
- Are you popular? Why or why not? Would you like to be?
- What do you think leadership is? What makes a good leader?

## Spirituality

- Do you believe in God? Why or why not? If so, how do you picture God?
- Do you ever talk to God?
- Is spirituality the same as religion or different?
- Has religion played a positive or negative role in history?
- Do you have good friends who practice religions that are different from ours? Acquaintances? How are you like them? How are you the same or different?
- Do you think there is one best religion? Why or why not?
- What do you think happens after death?
- What do you think is the meaning of life? Why are we alive?
- How will you know if you've had a successful life?

## **FURTHER READING**

How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen so Kids Will Talk – Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting – John Gottman

First Aid for Your Child's Mind – Alicia Eaton

<https://www.gottman.com/parents/>

No-Drama Discipline – Daniel Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw> Dan Siegel demonstrating his hand model of the brain

Calm Parents, Happy Kids – Dr Laura Markham

[www.ahaparenting.com](http://www.ahaparenting.com)

[GenMindful](#) - Resources to teach young children about emotions

My Hidden Chimp by Steve Peters

Dawn Huebner series for children on emotions: What to do when you worry too much, What to do when your temper flares etc

<https://www.common sense media.org/lists/meditation-apps-for-kids>

Top mindfulness and meditation apps for kids with suggested ages

