



## **“CONNECT BEFORE YOU CORRECT”**

### **CONNECT**

**Check-in (with the moment and with your feelings)**

**Opportunity for teaching**

**Notice their feelings**

**Normalise, label and validate**

**Empathise**

**Consider setting limits**

**Team-work-problem solve together**





## CONNECT

### Check-in (with the moment and with your feelings)

It is important to be aware of the different emotions you may be feeling before responding to the child. It is helpful to take a moment to '**check-in**' with yourself, your emotions and your bodily reactions (e.g. feeling overwhelmed/angry/worried; heart racing).

### Opportunity for teaching

It is important not to dismiss or avoid the emotions the child is feeling. Instead notice emotional reactions as an opportunity to connect with the child about their feelings and help them to learn new ways of coping (the latter being addressed later in the process). Adults need to understand that emotions are innate but our skills to cope with them are not. Children need opportunities to learn how to cope with their 'big feelings'. *Here the adult will consider **how the child can best learn strategies for managing their emotions.***

### Notice their feelings

It is important to be aware of the different emotions a child may feel. At this point the adult should *observe, listen, and learn* how the child expresses different emotions and to *watch for changes in facial expressions, body language, posture, and tone of voice.*

**Consider:** *is the child ready and able to listen to me right now? Or do they need to engage in an activity to help calm them down with the help of an adult (e.g. having a cuddle, having a run around, playing catch or batting a balloon back and forth).*

### Normalise, label and validate

Normalise the emotional experience with the child by talking about it. Here the adult can label the emotion (e.g. "*I wonder if you are feeling **worried** about X?*") while validating this experience as normal (e.g. "*I can understand that you feel that way. I would feel frustrated if that happened to me too*"). Naming an emotion helps to soothe a child's dysregulation and supports the building of a vocabulary for different emotions.

### Empathise

Here it is important to take time to listen carefully to what the child is saying and showing by observing their behaviour, body language, tone or voice, and words. Adults should avoid judging whether the emotion is 'reasonable' in the given situation and instead **accept the emotional reaction** and **support** the child to find ways to cope with their 'big feelings', with support from the adult (e.g. showing concern through the adult's body language and facial expressions, getting down to the child's sight line, and making supportive comments like "*I understand you are angry and I can see this is making you feel very upset. I am not surprised you feel like this, I would too if X happened to me!*"). If the adult is finding this difficult then they might want to review the 'opportunity for teaching' section.

### Consider setting limits

After the above has been implemented the child and adult should be feeling calmer. This may be an appropriate time for the adult to set limits of behaviour that is acceptable (e.g. "*I understand that you were feeling angry but it is not ok to climb on furniture because that isn't safe*").

### Team-work-problem solve together

Here the adult and the child explore solutions to problems together. The adult demonstrates an understanding of the explanations for misbehaviours but seeks to help the child to consider alternatives the next time they experience similar emotions. This should be an *open discussion where the child can be encouraged to generate good, safe and healthy ideas for dealing with the emotion when it arises in the future.* These should always be **realistic** and **achievable** for the child.



## References

Emotion Coaching UK: <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

Gottman, J (1997) *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting*. Simon & Schuster.

Siegel, D & Payne-Bryson, T (2011) *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*. Robinson.