

HOW TO "COME ALONGSIDE" YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS



When we come alongside our children, we accompany them on their journey toward maturity. We take responsibility for their feelings when they are too immature to handle them. We focus on the feelings first without getting distracted by situations or behaviors.

WHAT TO DO*



ACCEPT the existence of the feelings even if they seem irrational to you.



Tip: Make observations about what you see. "You seem nervous."



NORMALIZE the feelings rather than treat them like a problem to be solved.



Example: "Oh, I felt scared the first time I rode my bike, too."



MAKE ROOM for the feelings rather than trying to get rid of them.

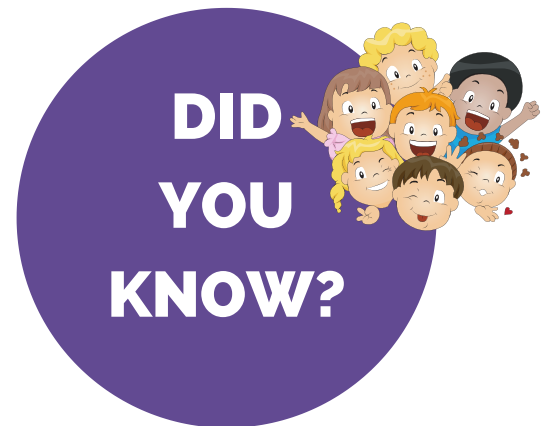


Insight: We have the hardest time accepting in our child what we don't accept in ourselves.

*These tips are from Dr. Gordon Neufeld's "Heart Matters" course.

The Catechism teaches us that "the Holy Spirit accomplishes his work by mobilizing the whole being, with all its sorrows, fears, and sadness" (CCC 176g)

Our children need all their feelings!



"Human emotions are like Plato's steeds: sometimes they take us on a wild ride, but they also carry us toward our divine destination."

-Kim Cameron-Smith

HELPING YOUR CHILD EXPRESS HER FEELINGS



Name Emotions

Young children often lack a word to describe their interior experience. Coach your child in naming emotions, especially frustration, sadness, and alarm.



Make It Safe

A safe relationship creates the context for emotional expression. We can set limits on the way a child expresses feelings without judging or minimizing the feelings.



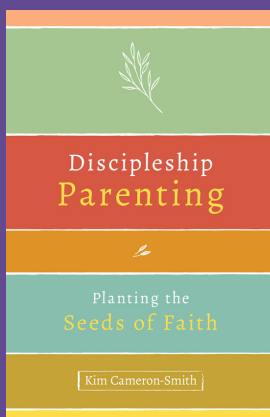
Invite Play

Play provides a safe way for children to express feelings. Great emotional playgrounds: dancing, dress-up, stories, art, music, rough housing, throwing, jumping.

When
emotions
become
stuck



- Emotions erupt (aggression, self-harming)
- Thwarts maturity
- Depression (the "lights" seem to be off inside)
- Failure to adapt to disappointment or failure
- Distorted/displaced emotion (anger at pet or sibling)



LEARN MORE!

See Kim's book *Discipleship Parenting: Planting the Seeds of Faith* (Our Sunday Visitor) Available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and OSV book store

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