



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES

It's great to say that children need challenges to grow and learn but how do we properly support them and help them grow from these difficult situations. This 4 step process will help you connect with your children and guide them through challenges instead of trying to eliminate them



1. START WITH EMPATHY

Whenever your child presents you with a new challenge they are facing, start with empathy. When you try to immediately boost their self-esteem or talk them out of their feelings they only have to fight harder to be heard. This can escalate the feeling for them and have the reverse effect of what you were hoping. Make sure you hear and acknowledge their feelings before adding your input. Even if you believe they shouldn't feel the way they do, it's best to accept their feelings as real for them.



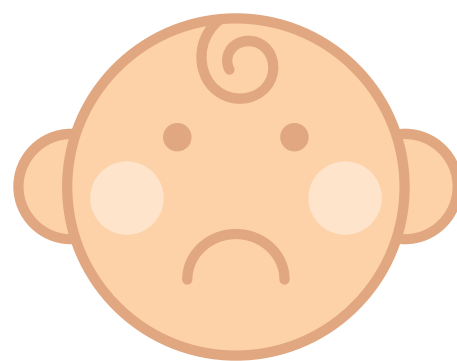
2. MAKE SPACE



Ever feel like the things you say aren't sinking in? This is because our children operate with very busy, full brains. In order to get your message through we need to clear a bit of space for the message we are sending. Allow your child to talk about their experience of the current challenge they are facing. Don't add any new input at this stage. Just listen to their experience as they clear out some thoughts.

3. SHARE A STORY

Once a window of space exists in their brain, start by sharing an experience you have had that was similar or made you feel similar feelings. This is a powerful way to connect with your child and help them feel like they are not alone in this. Connection is required to reduce anxiety and create a good dynamic for problem solving, if needed (often, you can even stop at this stage).



4. THINK ABOUT MEANING

Life is less about what happens to us and more about the meaning we make from our experiences. Once your child has been heard and you have created a connection with them, you can help them change the message they are getting from the challenge. Good problem solving usually involves looking at the situation from a new perspective. Ask them what they think the obstacle they are facing means... For example: What do you think it means when you fail a test? Check to make sure the meaning they are making isn't one that will prevent them from trying again like "I'm not smart" and instead think about a meaning that empowers them like "math is difficult and takes practice" or "it's normal to find some subjects harder than others".

