

Kimochis®

Helpful Ways to Talk About Feelings

Size

When your child shares an upset feeling, ask them to show you with their body if the feeling is small, medium, or big. Use your arms and hands to communicate each size as you speak it. For example, “*Are you a little mad, medium-sized mad, or really, really big mad?*” When we talk about the size of feelings, we are helping our children learn that feelings:

- Come in different intensities
- Come and go
- Can be made smaller or more manageable when we learn what to say and do to make things better

Practice

Use the word “practice” frequently as you practice your own communication and guide your child to practice their communication. For example, you might talk about your own communication by saying something like, “*I am going to practice my patience so I can make sure to handle this situation with kindness.*” Or you might coach your child by saying, “*Practice using your Talking Voice so I can listen to what is upsetting you.*” When you use the word “practice,” your children will understand that we need to put effort in and try again when we have not yet formed a positive communication habit. Let your children know that practice does not make perfect, but it does make things better!

Tools

Talk with your child about how tools help us. Hammers help us build. Pencils help us draw and write. Communication tools help us make and keep friends and do our best in school. Using the word “tools” makes communication sound and feel more tangible and lets children know there are positive actions we use to help us express feelings. (The Kimochis Keys to Communication are the tools!)

Habit

Using the word “habit” instead of “skill” can also make a big difference. The word “skill” gives the impression that you either have the ability or don’t have the ability. The word “skill” can also make one think that there is a right and a wrong way to do something.

Now take the word “habit.” Habits are often acquired without being directly taught. We can develop not-so-good habits, but with teaching, repetition, practice, positive feedback, and gentle reminders, we can learn and change to new, positive habits. Using the word “habit” in relation to communication can help your child feel more hopeful that they can improve. It can also encourage children to be more open to redoing or trying again when they forget to use positive communication.

Story

Most people start a conversation with “wh” questions: “*What? When? Where? Why? How?*” Typically, these questions result in simple answers. Consider the response you get when you ask someone, “*How are you?*” Most people will say, “*Fine.*” Instead, try using the word “story” as a way to encourage a fuller, richer response. “*Tell me a story about recess today.*” Everyone likes a story, and using the word “story” also can make a child feel less interrogated or on the spot.

Mistakes

Make your family a “Second Chance Family.” Tell your child that everyone will make mistakes when we express feelings. We may yell or accidentally say unkind words in the heat of the moment. Make an agreement that in your family, everyone gets the chance to stop and start again or redo a moment if they make a communication mistake.