

Introduction to Active Listening

What active listening is:

- Stop completely what you are doing, give full attention to your child
- Make eye contact, and listen fully
- Observe child's words and body language (facial expressions, tone of voice, energy level, etc.)
- Reflect to child what you are hearing them say in their words and feelings
- Gently invite child to discuss what happened

Example:

Child: *"Some kid was making fun of me at school today, I don't want to go to school tomorrow."*

Parent: *"I can see you are upset about what happened today, would you like to tell me about it"*

1. Reflecting what you see and hear says to your child that you are listening to them.
2. Gently invite your child to talk about the experience. This encourages the child to open about the experience.
3. If they don't want to talk, simply let them know you are there for them if they change their mind.
4. It shows you care about what happened and respect their feelings.

Active listening empowers the child to work through tough emotional states on their own:

- Child learns they can trust the adults in their life to listen to them when they are in distress.
- With the help of a parent, they learn how to express emotional experiences to trusted adults.

What active listening is not:

- Telling the child what they SHOULD be feeling
- Interrupting child while they are expressing their feeling
- Ignoring the child
- Distracting the child from pain through food, TV, video games, etc.

Example:

Child: *"Someone was making fun of me at school today, I do not want to go to school tomorrow"*

Parent: *"You are going to be fine tomorrow, why don't you go watch television!"*

1. Child feels invalidated because they DO NOT feel fine!
2. Child learns to turn to EXTERNAL sources to distract themselves from pain, rather than understand it and talk about it.