



Helping your Child

Express Their Feelings

A Parent's Guide



North York  
Community  
House





## Empower Your Child to Open Up and Share

As parents, we want our children to feel safe and comfortable talking to us about their thoughts and emotions.

In this guide, you will find

- The steps that might help you create a comfortable environment and
- The words that you can say to your child.



## Before we begin

Being a parent can be challenging. You're juggling different tasks like raising your child, dealing with work, taking care of the house, managing the finances...and the list can go on.

This is why it is important that you take care of yourself and you have a support system. This support system can consist of other parents, friends and family, resources from your child's school and even organizations like NYCH.

Now, let's look at our steps!



A photograph of two women with dark hair, smiling and looking at each other. The woman on the left is wearing a light pink button-down shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing a tan top. They are sitting on a green couch.

1

## Make the Environment Safe for Them

### Choose the Right Time and Place

Find a quiet, safe space to have a conversation, away from distractions. Distractions might be when your child is watching TV or when it is noisy with the family around.

Consider times like snack time or before bedtime when it's just the two of you.





### Start on a Positive Note

Begin the conversation by expressing your love and admiration for your child. Make them feel valued and appreciated.

### Avoid High-Emotion Moments

Try not to have this conversation during arguments or early in the morning. Why? Because during arguments, we might say things that we don't actually mean. And early in the mornings, we might be busy getting ready to go to work and school.

### Show Your Support

Let your child know that you won't get angry with them. Remind them of your unconditional love and support as they might be afraid of disappointing you

## Example sentences

I want you to know that you can always talk to me about anything.

I love you, and there's nothing you could say that would make me angry.

Your feelings matter, and I'm here to understand and support you.



A photograph of a man and a young boy in conversation. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue and white striped button-down shirt and has a beard. He is gesturing with his right hand while speaking. The boy, on the right, is wearing a light blue and white long-sleeved shirt and is listening intently. They are standing in front of a building with large windows.

## 2

### Be Curious and Acknowledge Their Feelings

#### Start by Noticing Changes

Begin the conversation by mentioning any changes you've noticed in their behavior, mood, or reactions.

#### Express Your Curiosity

Share that you are asking yourself about how they might be feeling or what might be on their mind. Encourage them to open up.

## Normalize Their Feelings

Help your child understand their emotions by naming them. This validation can make them feel seen and heard.

### Example sentences



I've noticed you've been spending more time alone in your room. Is everything okay?



I can see that you're feeling really angry right now.





# 3

## Stay Calm and Listen to Your Child

### Give Them Time

Give your child some time to reflect before responding.

### Stay Calm

Be mindful of your initial reactions, a comment, an eye roll, a sigh, as they can impact future conversations. Take a deep breath before responding if needed.

## Reassure Them

Let your child know you won't pressure them to share, but you're always there whenever they're ready.

## Be Glad They Shared

If your child opens up, express your gratitude for their honesty and assure them of your help.

## Work in Partnership

Collaborate with your child to find solutions. Include them in problem-solving and respect their input.





## Example sentences

I won't push you, but I'm here to listen and support you whenever you want to talk.

What can I do to support you right now?

When you talk about your feelings, would you like me to just listen, or do you want me to offer suggestions as well?



## Avoid Helicopter Parenting

- Focus on listening without immediately offering solutions.
- Allow your child to handle situations they can manage on their own.
- Ask for clarification or more information instead of assuming you know what's best.
- Show options and let your child choose what they feel is closer to them when discussing solutions.





## Remember

The most important thing is to remind them that you're on their team, no matter what. Your love and support can make all the difference in helping your child navigate their emotions and challenges.

We hope that you feel more confident in talking with your child. As you might know, communication is key. If you need support, you can reach out to the Mental Health Team at NYCH.

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