

Emotion Coaching

1. Goal: For your teen to define their emotion—to feel heard.

Example parent prompts:

- “That would be scary for me, how do you feel?”
 - “Were you embarrassed?”
 - “That sounds difficult.”
 - “You seem worried.”
 - “I am not sure what I would feel if that happened to me.”
 - “You are quiet today.”
 - “I can tell this is important to you.”
 - “You seem sad – want to sit here a bit? I was going to have some tea.”
 - “Tell me more. I don’t understand.”
2. Goal: Create an opportunity for your teen to find an “action plan” If possible, with at least two ideas. Sometimes kids (and adults) need to sit with their emotions a bit and transition later to make a plan.

Example parent prompts:

- “Being part of something with friends feels better than being left out – that sounds painful. Do you think you will say anything?”
 - “I know you are a capable person – I would love to hear what you are thinking.”
 - “I am uncertain what I would do in a similar situation – what are your thoughts?”
 - “That sounds difficult and you seem upset – would you like to join me walking the dog around the block? Sometimes I find I need to relax before I can come up with some ideas.”
 - “I am invested in hearing more – I can see it’s important. Let’s talk after soccer practice. You will have a chance to run off your anger a bit – and I will have more time and be able to listen better after I pick up your brother.”
 - “Wow. I feel as uncertain as it sounds like you are right now. Sometimes it helps me talk to other people when I am stuck. What would you think about connecting to your coach/teacher about this?”
 - “Would you be interested in hearing what other kids have done in a similar situation?”
 - “I have some ideas if you think it would be helpful. Let me know.”
3. Goal: Encourage your teen to visualize the how their action plan will play out.
- “I would be nervous others would misunderstand me if I said that – how are you picturing the other kids will respond?”
 - “You are courageous. I like how you are going to tell her what you think is important. What will you do if she gets angry?”
 - “Great. That is one solution – you seem determined about that.”
 - “Sometimes I need a back-up plan. Do you think that would be helpful now?”
 - “I can see how you would feel more powerful if you did that. I am wondering how you imagine the other kids would feel if that happened?”
 - “I hope it goes well. I admire your tenacity.”
 - “That is a tough choice. I’m a big fan of yours. I look forward to hearing how it goes.”

Adapted from resources: John Gottman Ph.D – Gottman Institute

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