

# Healthy Boundaries and Communication

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Newly Discovered DNA Evidence Suggests Children  
Could Be Closely Related To Humans [bit.ly/2TR7rw2](https://bit.ly/2TR7rw2)



# Remember ABC:

**A**ll

**B**ehavior is

**C**ommunication

## When I...

- Hit my brother
- Throw a toy
- Refuse to go to bed

## I might be trying to say...

- “I’m feeling overwhelmed and need you to leave me alone for a bit.”
- “It frustrates me that I can’t make this toy do what I want it to do.”
- “Not all of my needs have been met so I don’t feel ready to sleep yet.”

Before you respond, think *What are they trying to say?*

# But hang on...

What needs might not be met?

# Fundamental Emotional Needs

All children need to hear four things:

**I am here**

**I see you**

**I understand you**

**I care about you**

# “I Understand You” Does NOT Mean...

“I always agree with you.”

“I always think you’re right.”

“I will always let you do what you want.”

**I Understand You** is just that: I am truly trying to feel what you’re feeling.

All of this can be summed up in one phrase:

**The Be-~~With~~ Attitude**



# Be With, not Do With

Think of the last time you truly felt someone was telling you, “I am here, I see you, I understand you, I care about you.”

- Was it in the middle of soccer practice?
- Were you doing anything at all?
- If you were, was it about what you were doing, or the person you were doing it with?

As a rule, children don't want to do things with their parents. **They want to be with their parents.**

# The 30-Second Burst of Attention

Instead of giving them a little over a long period of time, give them EVERYTHING for just 30 seconds:

- Tell your friend to hold on / mute the phone / put down the cutting board, etc.
- **Turn your whole body to your child and get down on their level.**
- Listen to what they have to say. Be fully with them.
- “Thank you so much for telling / showing me. I have to finish \_\_\_\_\_ but then I’ll come see you / help you / clean up, etc.”
- **Follow up with what you said .**

This behavior communicates  
*Even if I can't be with you right now, I always want to be.*

# Be- With Times

Pick a time in the day for BeWith Time – even 15 minutes is better than nothing!

- In the car
- Over dinner
- After baby sibling goes to bed
- Before bed (set a timer)
- Make it part of your routine and stick to it

*Routine is not about schedules and organization. It is about a child being ~~reliably~~ predict when their needs will be met.*

# My Little Clock



# Be- With Times

Okay, I've got time blocked out... now what?

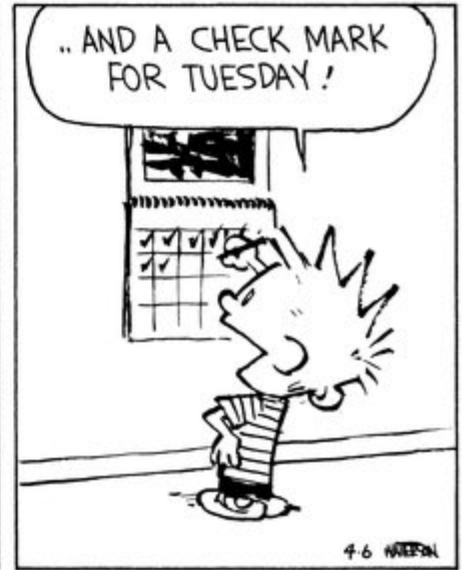
- Personal connection is a skill to be learned, just like anything else
- Model telling them about your day
- Ask open-ended questions to prevent one-word answers
- Model expressing feelings— “You must have been sad when that happened” or “You sound happy you got to play with her.”

Remember your emotional needs as well— if it's a time you usually feel stressed out, exhausted, and like you want to be alone *that's not a good time to try to Be With anyone.*

# Okay but...



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How do I Be With *this*?!

# Before it's too late, remember to ACT!

Setting limits with a Be-With Attitude in 3 easy steps:

- Acknowledge the feeling
- Communicate the limit
- Target an alternative

*“Calvin, I understand you’re having fun, but the pot is not for banging on. You can play with your toy drum upstairs or go run around outside.”*

# Acknowledge the Feeling

- **The most important step**
  - When was the last time you listened to someone who doesn't listen to you?
- Models communicating feelings with words
- All feelings are acceptable; all actions are not.

*“I know you’re angry...”*

*“You’re very sad right now...”*

*“You want to stay up and play...”*



# Communicate the Limit

- \_\_\_\_\_ is not for \_\_\_\_\_.
  - No blame, no shame
  - Eliminates power struggles
- Prompts children to be more mindful of others and surroundings
- You accept and understand *them* while still limiting the action

*“But your brother is not for hitting.”*

*“But the toy is not for throwing.”*

*“But bedtime is not for playing.”*

# Target an Alternative

- That feeling has to go *somewhere*
- Models healthy, beneficial expression of emotions
- Should correspond with the emotion (e.g., physical release of anger)

*“You can hit this pillow instead.”*

*“You can come get a hug or play with the toy on the ground.”*

*“You can choose a bedtime story for us to read or we can talk about your day for 15 minutes.”*

# Remember to ACT!

- “**I know you’re hungry now** , but before dinner is not for snacks. You can help me set the table so we can eat faster or wait with your brother in the playroom.”
- “**I know you’re sad that it’s bedtime** , but now is not time for more stories. You can have storytime earlier tomorrow night so we can read extra.”
- “**I understand you’re very angry** , but your sister is not for hitting. You can hit a pillow or tell your sister with your words.”

*All behavior is communication, and sometimes that communication is “I don’t feel heard.” If you start listening, they start listening.*

*Nothing in this moment is more important than  
your relationship with your child*

Not soccer, not grades, not gymnastics, not their future college applications.  
Nobody regrets spending too much time with their kids.

# Q&A

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