

Emotion Coaching

A parents bite size
guide – session 3

What messages do we give about emotions?

- If you see a young person upset, quiet or even about to flip their lid, saying the typical British 'stiff upper lip' reply 'it will be okay', 'it's okay', 'don't worry' is actually dismissive. We all tend to do this naturally, it does not come from a bad place but it can be unhelpful. Telling someone not to worry has never stopped anybody worrying.
- Gender differences may impact how you view and respond to a young person's emotions. For example, anger is acceptable for boys and crying is acceptable for girls. When in fact, all emotions are okay for all genders.
- Generational ideas which stem from the war time to hide and repress emotion still exist somewhat in our society. It also depends on how you were parented and how your emotions were dealt with during your teens. We are now in a new generation where emotions are much more able to be acknowledged. There is much more research and understanding around the function of emotions, however, it is relatively new.



Which communication style are you?

Emotion coaching is a style of communication. If it doesn't come naturally to you it can be learnt. You must practice it and don't worry, it doesn't have to be all the time and if you are not able to manage it then start again next time.

Dismissing

- **Avoids** emotions/wants to **get over** emotion quickly
- Uses **distraction**
- Jumps straight to **problem solving**

Laissez Faire

- Show empathy but offers **little guidance**
- Does **not set limits**
- **Shows own emotions** but unable to resolve them

Disapproving

- Judges and **criticises** emotions
- Viewed as sign of **weakness**
- May see emotional display as **manipulation**

Emotion coaching

- Uses **empathy** to connect
- All emotions are **okay and healthy** (but not all behaviours)
- **Scaffolds** problem solving
- **Negotiates** boundaries (where possible)

At this point you should access a video on YouTube which demonstrates the difference between a dismissive and emotion coaching style approach

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38iEhI9_DW

Dismissive Vs Emotion coaching role play

Have a go at reading out loud these role plays with someone at home. Swap roles and take note on the feelings you experience in each.

Being dismissive: Dad and Jimmy

Dad: Jimmy, you're pretty quiet over there. You alright?

Jimmy: Yeah fine.

Dad: You sure?

Jimmy: I said I'm fine. (In grumpy voice)

Dad: Sorry I asked. I was just trying to help.

Jimmy: I didn't ask for your help.

Dad: (In an irritated voice) settle down! I was just trying to ask why you're looking so sad for yourself.

Jimmy: Whatever! (Walks away)

Emotion Coaching: Dad and Jimmy

Dad: Jimmy, you're pretty quiet over there. You alright?

Jimmy: Yeah fine.

Dad: You sure?

Jimmy: I said I'm fine. (In grumpy voice)

Dad: Okay. (Pause) You look a little down right now. I was just wondering if there's something going on.

Jimmy: Nah, nothing really. I'm just pretty sick of everything.

Dad: Oh. Sounds tough. (Pause) Is it anything to do with friends?

Jimmy: Yeah, I'm so over it. They just let me down all the time and I don't want to hang out with the idiots anymore.

Dad: Anyone done anything in particular?

Jimmy: Yeah. They keep teasing me and saying that I'm gay.

Dad: Sounds like you're feeling a bit hurt.

Jimmy: It's not like I don't want a girlfriend. But my friends say I'm useless with girls and that I must like guys.

Dad: Teasing can be so hurtful. But there's nothing wrong with being gay, or liking guys. Mr Martin is gay, and he's pretty cool isn't he?

Jimmy: Yeah, he is great. It just makes me feel bad when they say I am.

Dad: For some reason, guys often say someone's gay when they want to make that person feel left out, or bad about themselves. I remember it happened to me when I was at school. I wasn't too confident with girls myself at the time, and getting teased didn't help.

Jimmy: I wish I could just ignore it.

Dad: Yeah. That's the best thing. Once they see you don't react, it gets boring and they go for someone else. But ignoring it can be hard.

Jimmy: Yeah, that's what I've gotta do. But I feel like punching them sometimes!

Dad: Yeah, you've got to get that angry stuff out somewhere else. How about a kick of the football?

How did being Jimmy make you feel in role play one as opposed to role play two?

How did being Dad make you feel in role play one as opposed to role play two?

Emotion coaching isn't always easy. Especially if you're busy, tired or doing other things, or if you struggle to empathise with others. This will develop the more times you allow yourself to connect with anyone around you...



What is emotion dismissive parenting?

Being warm and concerned does not always mean you are responding to the emotions in what your teen is saying.

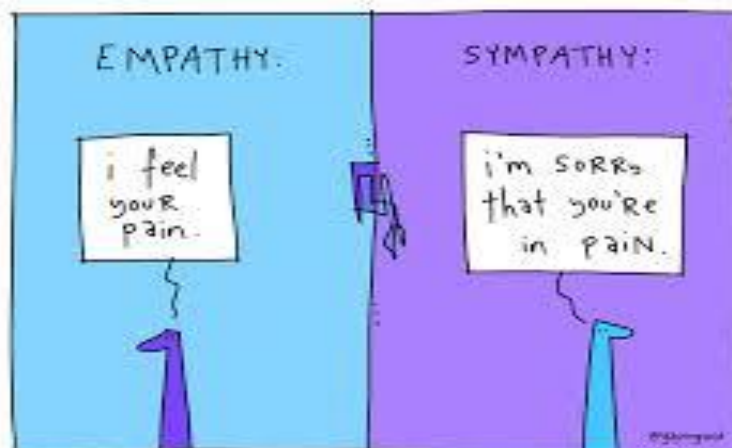
While being dismissive you might:

- offer advice (for example, 'You should have ...')
- ask why your teen did or said what they did
- talk only about yourself
- tell your teen not to worry
- jump straight into problem solving
- take the side of the other person (for example the teacher, friend or sibling) instead of listening to the teen's perspective
- offer distractions
- moralise.

Adapted from Gottman, J. M. & DeClair, J. (1997). *The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

At this point you should access a video on YouTube which demonstrates the difference between sympathy and empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>



Conversation with your teen— things that make you feel good

Talk to your teen and brainstorm a list of things that they do that make them feel good or help them when they are feeling a bit down.

Try not to suggest anything yourself, but be guided by them. If they don't come up with anything right away, ask them to think about it for the next day and you can chat about it again.

You could start with 'I have an activity that I have to do for next week. I have been asked to ask you what things you enjoy doing that make you feel good.'

Remember we only need to emotion coach 30-40% of the time.