



Providing a Safe Space for Conversations

It can be challenging to grapple with uncomfortable feelings and negative thoughts. Children may hesitate to share their true thoughts and feelings with their parents, as they may fear being judged or misunderstood.

You can let your child know that it is normal to feel or think the way they do, and that they can feel safe expressing themselves with you.



✓ Things You Can Do



Listen attentively. Maintain eye contact and put away your devices to show that you are paying attention.



Ensure that the environment is conducive and comfortable for your child. E.g. recreate an environment where your child had previously opened up to you, and have the conversation in a place where your child feels they have privacy.



Listen to understand, instead of listening in order to give advice and offer solutions.



Take a step back to calm down if things get heated, and return to the conversation after calming down.



Check that your child is comfortable with you sharing what they have told you with other people. If you have to do so out of concern for their safety, explain to your child why it is necessary.

○ Things You Can Say

- Use open ended questions to find out more about your child's perspectives and feelings.

How did that make you feel?

- Acknowledge that your child's opinions and feelings are valid, even if you disagree with them or do not fully understand them.

I hear that you are feeling frustrated.

- Let your child know that it is natural to experience these feelings, and that you experience them too.

I can see why you are upset. I would be too.

- If you are not sure what else to do, you can let your child know you are concerned for them, and offer support or a listening ear.

How can I help? What support do you need from me?

! Avoid responding negatively to your child, such as with criticism (e.g. "That was stupid."), minimising their feelings (e.g. "Get over it.") or shaming them (e.g. "You're so useless.").