

Emotion Coaching Scripts

6-step approach from ‘labelling’ to ‘solutions’. Below are some example ‘scripts’. It is important that the child’s feelings are not dismissed, that they feel validated, but take ownership. The key phrase in emotion coaching is “connect before you correct”.

Step 1: Labelling

Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt. Take on the child’s perspective; use words to reflect back the emotion and help the child to label that emotion.

- “ You seem angry to me” or sad, upset, fed up etc.
- “ I can see you are angry.”
- “ I can tell you are angry.”
- “ The way you are feeling is making you/ made you angry.”
- “ You’re angry about....”
- “ You look kind of angry”. Or “Your face shows that you are angry.”
- “ You are obviously angry.”
- “ I can see that something’s not quite right – can you tell me about it?”

Step 2: Empathising

Affirm and empathise with the emotion, allowing time and space for calming down.

- “ I’m sorry that happened to you, you must have felt angry?”
- “ I can see that you get angry when that happens/ when I do this.”
- “ I would feel angry if that happened to me.”
- “ That would make me angry.”
- “ I understand why you are angry.”
- “ It’s normal to feel angry about that.”
- “ It’s ok to feel angry about that.”
- “ I know you’re feeling angry – I would feel the same too.”

Step 3: Limit setting

Separate emotion from the behaviour. Clarify what is acceptable expression of emotion, and what is not. Allow time and space for calming down.

- “.... It’s not ok to behave like that.”
- “.... That behaviour is not acceptable.”
- “.... The rules are that we don’t do that.”
- “.... We don’t deal with that by lashing/ hitting out.”
- “.... You cannot behave like this.”
- “.... This is not a safe place to be angry. Let’s go to a safe place where we can talk.”
- “.... Behaving like that is not helpful.”
- “.... In this house we behave in a more appropriate way.”

Step 4: Exploring

Explore the feelings that gave rise to the behaviour, and be specific.

- “ How were you feeling when that happened?”
- “ What did it make you feel like?”
- “ Have you felt this way before?”
- “ Why do you think you are doing this?”
- “ What does your body feel like now?”
- “ What feelings are you having now?”
- “ Can you tell me what happened?”
- “ What does it make you want to do?”

Step 5: Identifying possible alternative solutions

Identify alternative, more appropriate/ productive ways of expressing and/ or managing feelings, behaviours and actions. Empower the child to recognise the feelings and take ownership.

- “ Let’s think of what we could have done instead.”
- “ Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings?”
- “ I can help you to think of a different way to cope.”
- “ Can you remember feeling this way before, and what you did?”
- “ Have you thought about doing this instead?”
- “ How did you handle it last time?”
- “ How can you get over this?”
- “ Can you remember what we discussed last time?”

Step 6: Agreeing which solution is best.

Agreeing possible solutions and ‘scaffolding’ suggestions where appropriate.

- “ Try and do this next time you feel like this.”
- “ Let’s decide what you will do next time you feel like this.”
- “ What do you think you can do better/ change next time?”
- “ Do you think doing that would be more helpful for you and others?”
- “ What could you have done?”
- “ Can you remember what we agreed?”
- “ This is what we can do instead.”
- “ How do you think you will react next time, or if this happens again?”

Example script

Here is an example ‘script’ that takes an element from every Emotion Coaching Step.

“ I can see you are feeling angry. It’s ok to feel angry about that – I would feel the same. However, it’s not ok to behave like that. Can you tell me what happened? Let’s think of what we could have done instead. Well, try and do this next time you feel like this.”