

Supporting Parents As They Gain Confidence in Parenting and Other New Life Experiences



Parents are born with the birth of a child. There is no manual (though there is lots of good information). New parents are understandably fearful. So how do you help parents take control of their own emotions and make their own decisions? How do you offer them the tools, space and freedom they need to become stronger?

The truth is, parents make mistakes. It's part of the human experience. We all make mistakes. That is how we learn. **Knowing that they can recover from a mistake will alleviate their fears when making choices in life.** It also teaches them to feel, think and act and to trust their own judgment.

Here are some ways you can communicate with parents through the learning process to more effectively reach them, especially after they have had a challenging moment or upsetting reaction to a parenting event.

- Calmly and with a sincere interest in understanding, ask the parent to explain to you what happened, what they did and why. If the parent trusts you, they will be honest. Listen with empathy and try to connect to the parent's emotions. Observe for feelings. They may be frightened or even surprised at the choice they made, and worried about the consequences. They may feel ashamed and guilty. They may be embarrassed and disappointed in themselves.
- Discuss together the many possible consequences that could have come from the mistake. This should be done in the spirit of learning together, not preaching. You are only seeking to share information, not condemn.
- Go over the sequence of events that took place and explore possible alternative choices. We all sometimes make a bad decision because we could not see what other choices could have been made. Talk together about realistic solutions for future instances. This can help them avoid repeating the behavior that they did not like.
- Ask the parent to repeat to you what they heard from your conversation together.
- Remind the parent that any time in life that they are learning, they will make mistakes. Let the parent know that they can get back on track and are able to make better choices in the future.