

A tiny baby has no language. When little children are scared, frustrated, happy, anxious, or sad they don't have words for their feelings. Anger is a secondary emotion that is created by other, deeper emotions. One of the most important things a parent can do for their child, beyond meeting their physical and mental needs is to help them recognize, understand and process their emotions.

Accept and Validate

To help children deal with their emotions, first we must ACCEPT their feelings. When people aren't heard, both adults and children, it creates an anger and resentment. Emotional validation helps children put words to their emotions and then process them.

Respond

What does a validating response look like? It is simple. FIRST, hear what your child is saying, disconnected from your opinions or emotional state at the time. SECOND, Validate those emotions. And then, when the child feels emotionally heard, your wisdom can be offered. Let's look at a few scenarios with a validating response.

Child: "I think the movie was stupid."

A validating response might be, "Really? What about it made you think it was stupid?"

He might answer, "Well, I didn't like that weird girl."

A validating response: "So, what didn't you like about her?"

His response. "I don't know. She was just snotty."

Validating response: "Hmmm. I get that, sometimes people just bug us. What part did you like about the movie?"

The child feels heard, validated and important because his parent wants his opinion. Amazing that by simply using validation, the outcome can be so different.

Nonetheless

When a child comes in emotionally demanding, something you can use is validation followed by the word NONETHELESS. Instead of escalating the situation with returned anger, you maintain both your cool and your authority and validated feelings! If you have a strong-willed child, you may have to repeat this more than once, or twice. What is the message you are sending your child when you respond like this? First, you validate their feelings. Second, you maintain your authority. Third, you respect your child while staying firm and setting boundaries.

Children want a parent to be the parent. They want reasonable discipline. They NEED parents to say no when things aren't good for them.

Our words matter. Our words frame the way our children see themselves and understand their value.