

WHAT you can say when children are upset

When children are upset, we are often triggered by their emotions and our desire to make them feel better or to fix the problem. We may not know what to say or wonder if we said the right thing. Before we can help them, we first need to regulate our own emotions and get into a calm space, so that we can be available to them as emotional coaches.

The next time a child is upset, read through the statements below and find one that you think is a good fit for the child or the situation. Just taking the time to do this will help you tame your emotions so that you can be more available to help the child.

These statements are meant to secure your relationship with the child and reassure them that they are safe to work through their difficult feelings or a difficult situation with you. Once they have worked through their feelings, you can then begin the problem solving process with them.

1. Do you need a break / catch your breath?
2. We're in this together / I can help you.
3. I trust you. We can figure this out.
4. I understand you are upset and that's okay.
5. I can see this is hard for you.
6. Can you help me understand what you need?
7. I care about you. You are safe.
8. I'm here for you / Would you like help?
9. Would you like to try again?
10. That was really sad/disappointing/frustrating.
11. Let's come up with a solution together.

Think about posting these questions on a bulletin board, fridge, wall where you interact with children. Make a key-ring with all the questions on it. Develop some magnets or buttons with these questions and distribute to others. Practice them every day until they become natural.

These questions will support you in role-modelling emotional regulation which will open doors to meaningful relationships that help all kids thrive.

Thank you to Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK) Occupational Therapy: The Kindness Project for sharing this resource with us.



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