

Effective Ways to Handle Feelings

- ▶ Identify and acknowledge the feeling. Name the feeling. Restate the feeling. *“There’s a lot of worry (frustration, fear, etc.) right now.”*
- ▶ Validate the feeling. This helps parents experience your compassion and connection. Never underestimate the power of genuine validation. It is one of the most useful approaches. *“It makes a lot of sense that you feel confused (sad, worried, etc.) right now.”*
- ▶ Don’t reassure too quickly. (Don’t say: *“you’ll get through this.”*) Reassurance has its time but usually comes much later in discussions.
- ▶ Stop giving more information or details. Pause: sit. Be open to being with the feeling.
- ▶ Resist saying: *“Just calm down.” “Don’t worry.”*
- ▶ Respond to the source of the *feeling*, not to the display. For example, say: *“Hearing this new information about your son seems to be upsetting.”* Don’t Say: *“You don’t need to get so upset. Your outburst is not helping the situation.”*
- ▶ If you are uncertain or feel cautions about discussing *feelings*, begin with a disclaimer: *“I don’t know if this is true for you, but sometimes parents feel a bit...?”* or *“I’m wondering if you might be feeling...?”* or *“I could be wrong, but it seems like you might be feeling....”*
- ▶ Assign one team member to “pay attention” to the *feelings and process issues* during the meetings. This designated person should ensure that *feelings* are sensitively addressed either during or after meetings.
- ▶ View *feelings* as normal aspects to forming relationships. Begin the initial meeting with a public recognition of this concept: *“Teams are involved in hard work. All of us will experience a range of feelings during our meetings. It can be helpful to recognize this reality and respect the feelings.”*
- ▶ Remember that *feelings* can be our “best friends.” They are indications to pay attention. It is important to reframe the *feelings* and see the positive intent behind the *feelings*. (See attached list.)

