



Topics in Special Education - Dr. Katie Greenday

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Showing Empathy for Children with Learning and Attention Challenges

It is not always easy to respond with empathy. When you show your child that you understand and respect his/her needs, you can help him/her stay motivated and gain self-esteem. Additionally, you can build greater trust. Below are tips for responding with empathy.

1.) Don't just assume. Ask. In addition to paying attention to nonverbal cues about how your child is feeling, it is equally as important to ask your child directly about their feelings, experiences, and needs. When your child has an opportunity to explain these areas, he/she develops ownership for growth and learning.

2.) Don't jump right in and "fix it". Giving your child the opportunity to try working problems out themselves can help them practice self-advocacy skills. Many parents are used to immediately fixing problems for their child. Children may not want you to fix the problem, but instead just listen and understand the challenge they are facing.

3.) Ask open-ended questions. This is a way to give your child the opportunity to say what is on his/her mind without them feeling as if you have already drawn conclusions about the situation. For example, conversation is invited if you say "Is there something about today that was hard for you?" rather than "It looks like you had a rough day at school. Did you?" This may help both of you explore the problems and solutions in greater depth.

4.) Validate your child's feelings. Find a way to tell your child that his/her feelings are understood. You may want to tell your child that he/she has the right to feel the way he/she feels. You may not agree with your child's choices, but it is important to recognize that the way he/she is feeling is real to them.

Access the following link to find the information related to this topic.

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/understanding-childrens-challenges/talking-with-your-child/9-ways-to-show-empathy-for-kids-with-learning-and-attention-issues#slide-1>