

How to Get Unstuck

Identifying Emotions and Using Tools

I feel **frustrated** when...

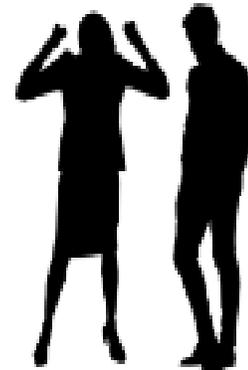
- My child yells "I DON'T KNOW" when I ask them what's wrong
- They storm away from me in the middle of a conversation
- I can't help them access support

I feel **discouraged** because...

- Nothing I say or do alleviates the situation
- My child is unhappy and I don't know what to do

You might feel **relieved** to hear that...

- You're not alone!
- There are strategies to help both you and your child develop the language necessary to get "unstuck"



You don't have to feel **anxious**, because the steps to getting "unstuck" are outlined below:

1. **STATE** that something doesn't seem right. It's best to tie in physical observations to increase your child's awareness that emotions are tied to bodily feelings. When they recognize the connection, they are better able to identify triggers and use tools.
 - a. "I notice that your fists are clenched and that you're grinding your teeth. Those are things I do when I'm mad."
2. **ASK** for clarification and state your intentions.
 - a. "Do you feel mad? I'd like to help."
3. **LISTEN**. It's best to allow your child to find their voice and give them space to sort through what they're feeling. Emotions and triggers can be confusing and difficult to vocalize. At this stage, they may not be ready for a reality – we'll get to that later.
 - a. Affirm that you're listening by nodding your head, or saying "mhm."
4. **REFLECT**. Summarize what they're saying to show that you've truly listened. Do not make value judgments or insert opinions. Ask if your summary has covered everything.
 - a. "Let me make sure I understand. You're mad because you didn't get to play your video game?"
5. **VALIDATE** what they are feeling. This doesn't mean that you have to validate their reaction, just that you are verbally acknowledging their experience.
 - a. "I'm sorry that you're feeling that way; that does sound very frustrating."
6. **IDENTIFY** tools that are available to help them get to a neutral state. Providing options will give them control and scaffold their ability to independently problem-solve.
 - a. "Let's use a tool to take your mind off it. Would you like to go for a walk? We could also play cards or go get something to eat?"
7. **BE PRESENT**. Be ready and available for when your child is back to a neutral state and ready to process. Reflect on problem size versus reaction size. It's useful to frame your perspective with "I was confused when..." to demonstrate how their behaviors can impact your understanding of the situation. Ask them to reflect on how to communicate their feelings differently in the future.
 - a. "I'm glad you're feeling better. I was confused when you started yelling and clenching your fists because I didn't understand why you were so mad. Usually when I see that, I think that something very bad has happened. How could you show or tell me differently in the future, so that I can help you?"