

# Staying Connected During Difficult Moments

## What am I feeling?

- I notice and accept my own feelings of anger, embarrassment, frustration . . .
- I pause—and take a moment (e.g. a breath) so I can be calm and flexible about how I respond.



## What is my child feeling?

- I wonder what my child is feeling and what might be motivating his/her behavior.
- I accept the feelings, whatever they are.



## How can I help?

Now, I can think about what my child needs and how I can respond so we stay connected.

## I help my child calm and learn about strong feelings.



- First, I use my body, voice, and words to help my child feel understood and know that I care.
- Next, I label my child's feelings.
- Now—or later—I teach my child acceptable ways to express strong feelings.

## I help my child learn to move on.



- I clearly state expectations for behavior; what my child can and cannot do. I help my child find something to do that is safe and acceptable.
- Now—or later—I teach my child how to think about the problem, and help them choose a solution.
- I reflect on how I can change things for next time.

# Staying Connected During Difficult Moments

All parents are triggered at times by their children’s challenging behaviors. When this happens it is easy to get upset because your child is upset. When you are upset it can be more difficult to stay connected to your child and respond to them the way you want to. It may be helpful to think about why you respond the way you do, so you can understand and accept your own feelings before trying to help your child learn to calm down. Another reason it may be helpful to figure out why you get triggered by certain types of challenging behaviors is that it may lead to a greater understanding of why your child gets upset, and how you can help them handle strong feelings or learn to remain calmer.

<i>When You Do This...</i>	<i>This Helps...</i>
<b>Think about what and why you are feeling in response to your child’s behavior. Take a moment to pause, understand, accept, and handle your feelings.</b>	You stay calmer so that you are able to respond in a way that is helpful versus reacting in anger or out of stress.
<b>Accept your child’s feelings, just as you accept your own feelings. You can accept feelings without accepting inappropriate behaviors.</b>	You understand what your child is feeling and needing and how this contributes to their behavior.
<b>Pause and think about what would most help your child in this moment.</b>	You respond in a way that best fits your child’s needs and state (hungry, tired, out of sorts).
<b>Use your body, voice, and words to help your child feel understood. Label your child’s feelings and offer soothing touches or stay nearby.</b>	Your child feel understood, and accepted, which helps them to calm and be more able to accept limits and move to better solutions.
<b>State clear expectations about what your child can and cannot do. Use guidance to help your child move on. When your child is calm enough to listen, help them think about other ways to handle the situation and manage their feelings.</b>	Your child learn that you will be there to help them when there is a problem. This teaches them how to calm down and what they can do when upset.

