

Validating

Validating another person's feelings is an important way to let them know you understand them and you care. Also, when you validate someone, it helps lower anxiety and improve communication and coping skills, especially in children. It is important to learn that feelings are not good or bad, but they may be comfortable or uncomfortable, and it's okay to express all feelings in a healthy way. Sometimes we have to work on allowing someone else to be uncomfortable for awhile, without trying to fix it or make it stop.

Statements that validate:

It seems like you feel angry right now. (And don't say anything else.)

Whatever you feel, it's okay. (And don't say anything else.)

I'd like to know how you feel, and I want to hear what you have to say. (Then practice good listening skills without trying to correct them.)

You have a right to your opinion. (In the case of parents and kids, this does not necessarily mean the child will get what they want or agree with the child. The parent has the final decision.)

It seems normal that you might feel frustrated in that situation.

That's uncomfortable, isn't it?

I'm sorry you are having that experience.

That sounds like a difficult problem. What are you going to do?

It may take some time before you feel better. How will you manage in the meantime?

Thanks for telling me how you feel/what you think.

You and I have very different perspectives on this.

DO NOT tell the other person "Don't cry" or "You shouldn't feel that way" or "Don't be angry/scared/sad." This will practically guarantee that they won't be open with you in the future.