



Range of Discipline Techniques

Reflecting Feelings

Reflecting feelings is simply mirroring the feelings a child expresses so the child feels understood and respected. When you reflect feelings, you show others that you are listening to their feelings. You don't criticize, put in your own opinion, give advice, or make judgments. Reflecting feelings helps children work through their problems in a healthy way. When children feel understood, they are less likely to rebel and act out for attention (Nelson, 2006).

Using Reflecting Feelings in Parenting

- **Prepare yourself.** Your child may act out due to his or her emotions. Anticipate your child's exaggerated actions. Be aware of your own emotions and stop yourself from reacting to your child's emotion, which can cause a head-on battle between you and your child.
- **Focus on your child.** When there is an issue that your child is struggling with, give your full attention to show you care.
- **Stay calm.** When your child reacts to negative emotions, take deep breaths and remain calm.
- **Listen.** Listen for the underlying reason of your child's actions. Look for the words behind the tone, and the feelings they can't communicate.
- **Use empathy to reflect feelings.** Try to see the situation from your child's perspective, even if you don't agree. You can show empathy by reflecting what you see, feel, and hear. For example, if your child is upset because he or she was not the first in line to be served ice cream, acknowledge the anger and tell him or her that you understand by doing the following:
 - I see: "I see that you are stomping your feet."
 - I hear: "I hear that you are frustrated with me."
 - Are you feeling: "Let me see if I understand. Are you feeling angry because you think it isn't fair to get your ice cream last?"
- **Have your child retell the story.** This will help your child move towards thinking logically instead of emotionally.
- **Message.** After the situation has died down, talk to your child about how emotions and actions work together. Their emotions come from a place inside that they may not be able to control, but children can learn to control their reaction. When everyone is calm, lessons can be learned about how to make better choices in the future.

Nelson, J. (2006). *Positive discipline: The classic guide to helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.* (3rd Ed.). New York: Ballantine Books.