

# How to talk so kids listen

PRESENTED BY KEY TO KIDS  
FOR RURAL HEALTH TASMANIA



# Not now, Bernard

by David McKee



"Hello, Dad," said Bernard.



"Not now, Bernard," said his father.



"Hello, Mum," said Bernard.



"Not now, Bernard," said his mother.



"There's a monster in the garden and it's going to eat me," said Bernard.



"Not now, Bernard," said his mother.



Bernard went into the garden.





The monster ate Bernard up,  
every bit.



Then the monster went indoors.



"ROAR," went the monster behind  
Bernard's mother.



"Not now, Bernard,"  
said Bernard's mother.





"But I'm a monster," said  
the monster.



"Not now, Bernard,"  
said Bernard's mother.

# Today we will look at...



## Acknowledging Feelings

Skills to allow children to move forward from feeling upset



## Encouraging Autonomy

Skills to allow children to become independent



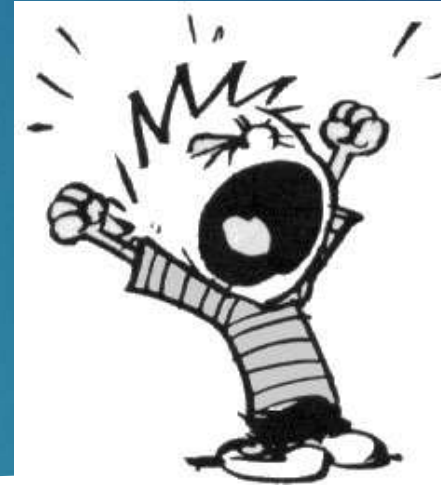
## Building Resilience

Skills to allow children to cope with disappointments and challenges

“

Only when a child feels right can he think right.

HAIM GINOTT



”

- Recognise parenting is a tough job!
- Pick your moments
- Skills help us deal with issues as they arise and enhance quality communication with our children



“No parent wakes up in the morning planning to make a child’s life miserable”

Haim Ginott ‘Between Parent and Child’

► What would you say to a guest who forgot their umbrella?

*What’s the matter with you?*

*You always forget something!*

*Why can’t you be more like your sister, she never forgets!*

*You’re 44 years old! Will you ever learn?*





Perhaps you might say...

▶ *“Here’s an umbrella, I see you left yours at home”*

**So why don’t we speak to our children the way we’d speak to guests?**

# Feelings are important



- ▶ Find an emotionally appropriate time to engage with your child
- ▶ Acknowledge when things are tricky, upsetting, disappointing
- ▶ Draw on child's previous experiences (not your own negative perceptions)

*"I know you worry about dogs since the puppy nipped you"*

*"It can really hurt not to be invited to a party when all your classmates are"*

*"I can see you're finding those maths questions tricky. Maths isn't your favourite is it?"*



# STOP what you are doing...

- ▶ Look and listen
- ▶ Say “Oh”  
“Hmmm...”  
“I see....”



# Give feelings a name



- ▶ Model how to identify feelings

*“I feel so upset I broke my favourite vase”*

*“I felt so worried when you ran away from me”*

*“I was so happy when you gave me a big cuddle!”*

- Build children's expressive language and give them a healthy way of dealing with unpleasant experiences
- *“Feelings must be dealt with before behaviour can be improved”* – H Ginott

# Anxious kid?

- Don't ask too many questions
- Listen without judgement or advice
- Keep your own fears or insecurities out of conversations
- Reflect on their concerns by saying 'oh, hmmm, I see..' or repeat back their ideas, adding a feeling word 'I can see how that might cause you worry'
- Leave the ball in their court – if they don't feel like sharing that's ok.

# ANGRY KID?

- Acknowledge the feeling without judgement 'Boy, you're angry'
- Don't try and reason with/problem solve in the heat of the moment – allow cool down time
- Don't ask too many questions or try to give advice
- If violence or inappropriate behaviours are a result of anger
  1. Acknowledge feelings
  2. State expectations
  3. Allow them to fix their mistakeONLY when feelings have stabilised





# REFLECTION

CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME YOUR CHILD WAS REALLY UPSET?

WHAT DID YOU DO? HOW DID IT GO? WHAT MIGHT YOU DO NEXT TIME?

# Encouraging Autonomy



# 1. Offer kids choices



- ▶ Boost self esteem
- ▶ Respect their opinion
- ▶ Engage cooperation – less arguments!

*“Would you prefer the red shirt or the green shirt?”*

*“Shall we do homework or have afternoon tea first?”*

*“Would you like to ride our bike or scoot to the shop?”*



## 2. Show respect for their struggles

- ▶ Always acknowledge feelings first

*“It’s tricky to tie your shoelaces”*

*“Long division isn’t always easy”*

*“It’s tough starting at a new school”*



- ▶ Give information to help

*“It might help to sit down so you can keep your balance”*

*“I found it helped me to do repeated subtraction”*

*“There are other 3 other children who are also new today”*

### 3. Questions... yes or no?

- ▶ Questions can put pressure on kids and cause self doubt
- ▶ Sometimes there are no answers!
- ▶ Instead, acknowledge feelings and leave the ball in their court

*"I can see you're upset. I'm ready to listen if you feel like sharing"*



## 4. Use information sources from outside the home

- ▶ Encourage an inquiring mind and follow areas of interest
- ▶ Interested in trains?  
Visit the train station or go on a trip
- ▶ Worried about a dying plant?  
Enquire at a nursery
- ▶ Thinking about becoming a doctor?  
Chat to your GP
- ▶ Mum and Dad are not Google!





## 5. Don't take away hope

- ▶ Instead of

*"You want to be a surgeon when you grow up? Are you sure? You need really good marks and you only just scrape a C in Science and Maths. Perhaps you should aim for something a little more realistic"*

- ▶ Try

*"A surgeon! That's a grand ambition!"*



# REFLECTION

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO BE INDEPENDENT AND CONFIDENT?

HOW COULD THESE SKILLS HELP INDEPENDENCE IN YOUR HOME?

# Empowering kids to be resilient

Can we teach our children to be buoyant?

“RESILIENCE” (NOUN) –  
ABILITY TO RECOVER READILY  
FROM ILLNESS, DEPRESSION,  
ADVERSITY, OR THE LIKE;  
BUOYANCY.

# State expectations

- ▶ Be proactive and anticipate potentially difficult situations for your children
- ▶ Be EXPLICIT
- ▶ If expectations are broken, REMIND then allow for them to FIX the situation

We are visiting Grandma in hospital.

Hospitals are quiet places where people are very sick.

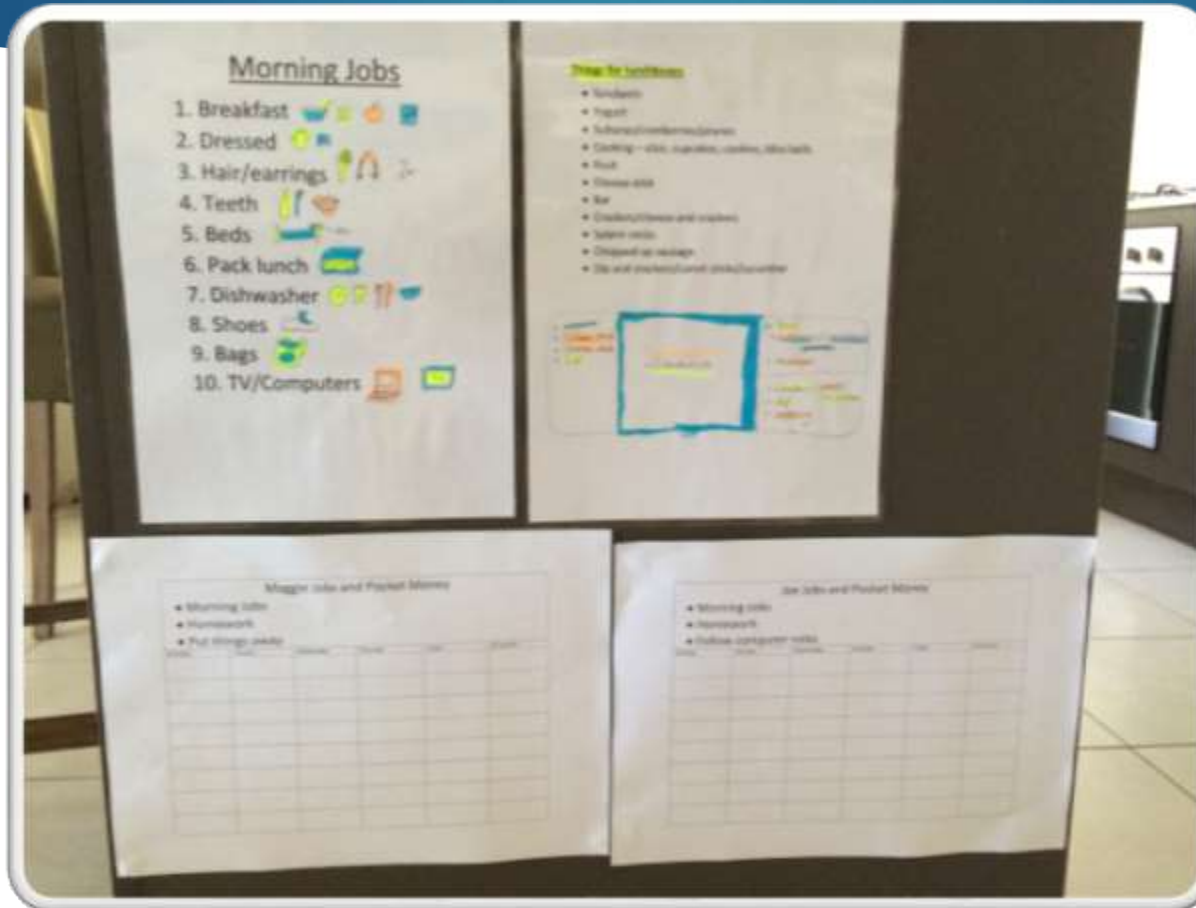
It might be boring for you – How will you handle that?

A reminder?

I expect you to play quietly.



# Do your kids know what's expected?



Negotiated

Clear

Measurable

# DESCRIBE

- ▶ Praise through description – no judgement or value
- ▶ Sum it up with a word to teach a 'value'  
*“Your homework is completed with 2 days to go. That’s what I call being organised!”*
- ▶ Catch them in the moment – look for opportunities  
*“You got out in the game and just accepted it without a tantrum. Now that’s resilient!”*

# Problem Solve to fix a problem

## What's the problem?

- Encourage your child to start with their point of view
- State the problem from your point of view

## Put your heads together

- Write a list of possible solutions
- Write down EVERYTHING without value or judgement



## Decide on a solution

- Cross off suggestions on the list that are not possible – acknowledging feelings
- Decide on ONE or TWO ideas to try
- Agree/shake/sign/display

# Teaching resilience

- ▶ Model – How do you handle stress?
- ▶ Use teachable moments – “You noticed Grandma was coughing and got her a drink of water. Now that’s considerate!”
- ▶ Be a storehouse to their outstanding moments – “Remember when you were learning your 3x tables? For weeks you struggled on your Friday test. But it didn’t deter you – you practiced and practiced until you got 10/10!”
- ▶ Anticipate difficulty – “How will you handle it if....”

“From minor mishaps children can learn major lessons in values” – H. Ginott.



# Authentic Parenting

- ▶ Say how you feel and be REAL
- ▶ Don't feed into the drama – keep YOUR anxieties and your child's anxieties separate
- ▶ Talk through your problem solving – MODEL how to handle a difficult situation calmly and methodically

“I'm so upset that I broke my grandma's vase! Now I'll need to clean up all the mess! Maybe I could try and glue it back together? I hope I can fix it”

# Buoyancy?

- ▶ State clear expectations
- ▶ Describe
- ▶ Problem solve
- ▶ Explicitly teach resilience
- ▶ Be authentic



Gives a 'go to'  
No assumptions  
Modelling  
Celebrates success



“

Our responses can make a  
decided difference in the  
atmosphere of our home.

”

H. GINOTT

Our words and feelings need to address our children's feelings – *feelings do not vanish by being banished.*

# Want to find out more?



- ▶ 'How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk' Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- ▶ [www.keytokids.com.au](http://www.keytokids.com.au)
- ▶ [www.facebook.com/keytokids](https://www.facebook.com/keytokids)
- ▶ Join my mailing list to find out upcoming events

