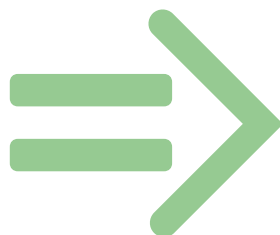




What to say instead of...

"YOU'RE OKAY"

When a child is upset or struggling, it can be tempting to reassure them by saying, "you're okay." However, this response can unintentionally make a child feel that their emotions aren't valid. Children are still learning to identify and express their feelings. Instead, try acknowledging their feelings with curiosity and validation. By validating their emotions, we help them feel seen and heard, building their confidence in understanding and managing their feelings.



"I can see you're frustrated"
"Your body looks like it got a fright"
"What happened?"
"That was a loud sound"
"That feels different"
Use a narrative: "I can see your body did X, I wonder what happened"

"YOU LIKE/YOU DON'T LIKE"

When we tell a child that "you like that" or "you don't like that," it can predetermine their response and unintentionally limit the child's ability to develop their own preferences. Children benefit from exploring their own likes and dislikes, which helps them understand themselves and make independent choices. Just because they may not like something the first time doesn't mean they won't like it the next time and vice versa. Instead, try prompting self-reflection with open-ended questions or comment on the sensory properties. Supporting children to discover what they truly like or dislike supports a stronger sense of self and independence as they grow.



Ask an open-ended question
"How does that make you feel?"
"What do you think of that?"
Comment on the sensory properties
"That's wet"
"It might make a loud sound"