

Hand in Hand Parenting With Madeleine Winter Staylistening



Lost connection = Emotional Emergency

When children lose their sense of connection, it's a kind of emotional emergency for them.

They can't tell you are there.

All sorts of things can cause a child to feel disconnected. It could be something that has just happened, or something

from the distant past.

You may even be offering all your loving attention, and a child may still not be able to tell that you are there.

Emotional Backpacks = Pretexts

Sometimes, when children are carrying around heavy “emotional backpacks”, they will find a “pretext” – some small thing – to get very upset about.

Children signal for help

If they feel unsafe, they will signal their need for help by going “off-track”. They will hit, bite, withdraw, whine, test limits....

When they are back in connection, they will release the feelings.

If they feel safe, they will start to release emotions:

- Tears contain stress hormones & release grief.
- Tantrums release frustration.
- Laughter heals fears.
- The sweating, struggle, shaking, and screaming are part of the healing process.

You can help your child offload these feelings by not stopping the upset, but offering “time-in” in the form of Staylistening.

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When your child is upset:

DO

- ♥ Move close, hold gently and offer eye contact
- ♥ Make it safe
- ♥ Make time & space for feelings
- ♥ Show you care – be especially tender, warm and approving.
- ♥ Communicate confidence
 - “I care. I am here. You are safe. I know it feels hard. You can do it.”
 - “I have to go now, but I’ll always come back to you.”
- ♥ Keep your upsets to yourself

DON'T

- ♥ Try to distract the child.
- ♥ Move too fast to fix the problem.
- ♥ Take it personally – they may “point it” at you, but you are just the safe place to show the hard feelings.
- ♥ Give advice. If you must, save it for later.
- ♥ Try to teach, reason or instruct – “five words or less”.
- ♥ “Analyse” or label the feelings – this will pull the child into their “thinking brain” and out of releasing emotions.
- ♥ Pass judgement.

When they are finished shedding emotions, children can relax, connect and enjoy life again.

Remember: - the crying, tantrums, sweating, and loud words –*are* the healing process.