

HELPING THE TEARS TO FLOW

Eva de Gosztonyi

1. Start by talking about and reflecting back the emotion
 - **Frustration** (anger): “That didn’t work for you.” “That’s not what you had in mind.” “That was so frustrating.”
 - **Alarm** (anxiety): “That was scary.” “You weren’t sure what was going to happen.” “You didn’t feel safe.”
 - **Seeking**: “You really wanted him to like you.” “You really wanted to play with her.”
2. Match the **intensity** of the Emotion (this lets the child know that you understand how this feels).
3. Then: Move subtly towards SADNESS by putting a tinge of sadness into your voice.
4. USE SILENCE
5. When the child starts to cry (sometimes children burst into tears spontaneously when they see us):
 - DON’T ASK WHY – children often have a lot of unshed tears about all that does not work in their lives. When asked “why” they will come up with a reason, but it is rarely the whole story. And we are often tempted to fix that problem.
 - If the child gives you a reason, don’t MINIMIZE it. If it seems trivial it is because the child usually doesn’t know the true reason for their sadness. We need to give them permission to feel this deep sadness without having to justify it.
6. When the tears start: SIT QUIETLY with compassion
7. Don’t try to take away the sadness. Murmur, rock and gently say, “I’m here.”
8. Resist the Alpha instincts to make things better.
9. **Give lots of space** for SADNESS and TEARS.
10. Once the tears have been shed, the child is able to bounce back – which is where true resilience comes from – “We must grieve what we cannot change so that it can change us.”
11. Wait to problem solve until WELL AFTER the tears, maybe even the next day.

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