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"The Next Generation"  
by Joanna Faber

**& Listen  
So Kids  
Will Talk**

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# How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk

30th Anniversary Edition

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

*Updated with new insights from the next generation*

You can stop fighting with your children! Here is the bestselling book that will give you the know-how you need to be more effective with your children—and more supportive of yourself. Enthusiastically praised by parents and professionals around the world, the down-to-earth, respectful approach of Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish makes relationships with children of all ages less stressful and more rewarding. Now, in this thirtieth-anniversary edition, these award-winning experts share their latest insights and suggestions based on feedback they've received over the years.

Their methods of communication—illustrated with delightful cartoons showing the skills in action—offer innovative ways to solve common problems. You'll learn how to:

- \* Cope with your child's negative feelings—frustration, disappointment, anger, etc.
- \* Express your anger without being hurtful
- \* Engage your child's willing cooperation
- \* Set firm limits and still maintain goodwill
- \* Use alternatives to punishment
- \* Resolve family conflicts peacefully

**How  
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“The Next Generation” by Joanna Faber

Illustrations by  
Kimberly Ann Coe

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# A Letter to Readers

Dear Reader,

The last thing we ever thought we'd be doing was writing a "how-to" book on communication skills for parents. The relationship between each parent and child is a very personal and private matter. The idea of giving anyone instructions on how to talk in such a close relationship just didn't feel right to us. In our first book, *Liberated Parents/Liberated Children*, we tried not to teach or preach. We had a story to tell. Our years of workshops with the late child psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott had affected our lives deeply. We were sure that if we told the story of how our new skills had changed the way we treated both our children and ourselves, that our readers would catch the spirit behind the skills and be inspired to improvise on their own.

To some extent it did work that way. Many parents wrote to tell us proudly of what they had been able to accomplish in their homes just from reading about our experiences. But there were other letters, and a common appeal ran through them all. They wanted a second book—a book with "lessons" . . . "practice exercises" . . . "rules of thumb" . . . "tear-out reminder pages" . . . some kind of materials that would help them to learn the skills "step-by-step."

For a while we considered the idea seriously, but our initial resistance returned and we pushed the thought to the back of our minds. Besides, we were too busy concentrating on the speeches and workshops we were preparing for our lecture tours.

During the next few years we traveled around the country, conducting workshops for parents, teachers, school principals, hospital staffs, teenagers, and child-care workers. Wherever we went, people shared with us their personal experiences

## A Letter to Readers

with these new methods of communication—their doubts, their frustrations, and their enthusiasm. We were grateful to them for their openness and we learned from them all. Our files were bulging with exciting new material.

Meanwhile, the mail continued to come in, not only from the United States but from France, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, the Philippines, India. Mrs. Anagha Ganpule from New Delhi wrote:

“There are so many problems about which I would like to take your advice. . . . Please let me know what I could do to study the subject in depth. I am at a dead end. The old ways do not suit me, and I do not have the new skills. Please help me get over this.”

That was the letter that did it.

We started to think again about the possibility of writing a book that showed “how.” The more we talked about it, the more comfortable we became with the idea. Why not a “how-to” book with exercises so that parents could teach themselves the skills they wanted to know?

Why not a book that would give parents a chance to practice what they’ve learned at their own pace—either by themselves or with a friend?

Why not a book with hundreds of examples of helpful dialogues so that parents could adapt this new language to their own personal style?

The book could have cartoons that would show the skills in action, so that a harried parent could glance at a picture and give himself or herself a quick refresher course.

We’d personalize the book. We’d talk about our own experiences, answer the most commonly asked questions, and include the stories and new insights that parents in our groups have shared with us over the past six years. But, most important, we’d always keep sight of our larger goal—the constant search for methods that affirm the dignity and humanity of both parents and children.

## A Letter to Readers

Suddenly our original uneasiness about writing a “how-to” book vanished. Every other art or science has its skill books. Why not one for parents who want to learn how to talk so their kids will listen, and listen so their kids will talk?

Once we decided, we started writing rapidly. We hope to get a complimentary copy off to Mrs. Ganpule in New Delhi before her children are grown.

Adele Faber  
Elaine Mazlish



# How to Read and Use This Book

It seems presumptuous for us to be telling anyone else how to read a book (particularly when both of us have been known to start books in the middle or even read them backward). But since this is our book we'd like to tell you how we think it should be tackled. After you've gotten the feel of it by flipping through and glancing at the cartoons, start with Chapter I. Actually *do* the exercises as you go along. Resist the temptation to skip over them and get to the "good parts." If you have a compatible friend with whom to work on the exercises, so much the better. We hope you'll talk and argue and discuss your answers at length.

We also hope you'll write your answers down so that this book becomes a personal record for you. Write neatly or illegibly, change your mind and cross out or erase, but do write.

Read the book slowly. It took us more than ten years to learn the ideas in it. We don't suggest that you take that long to read it; but if the methods suggested here make sense to you, you might want to make some changes, and it's easier to change a little at a time than all at once. After you've read a chapter, lay the book aside and give yourself a week to do the assignment before going on. (You may be thinking, "With everything else I have to do, the last thing I need is an assignment!" Nevertheless, experience tells us that the discipline of having to put skills into action and record the results helps put the skills where they belong—inside you.)

Finally, you may wonder why some portions of this book, which is written by two people, are told from the point of view of one person. It was our way of solving the bothersome problem of constantly having to identify who was speaking about

## How to Read and Use This Book

whose experience. It seemed to us that “I” would be easier for our readers than a constant repetition of “I, Adele Faber . . .” or “I, Elaine Mazlish. . . .” As for our conviction of the value of the ideas in this book, we speak in unison. We have both seen these methods of communication at work with our own families and with thousands of others. It is a great pleasure for us to share them with you now.

# 1 | Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

## PART I

I was a wonderful parent before I had children. I was an expert on why everyone else was having problems with theirs. Then I had three of my own.

Living with real children can be humbling. Every morning I would tell myself, “Today is going to be different,” and every morning was a variation of the one before: “You gave her more than me!” . . . “That’s the pink cup. I want the blue cup.” . . . “This oatmeal looks like throw-up.” . . . “He punched me.” . . . “I never touched him!” . . . “I won’t go to my room. You’re not the boss over me!”

They finally wore me down. And though it was the last thing I ever dreamed I’d be doing, I joined a parent group. The group met at a local child-guidance center and was led by a young psychologist, Dr. Haim Ginott.

The meeting was intriguing. The subject was “children’s feelings,” and the two hours sped by. I came home with a head spinning with new thoughts and a notebook full of undigested ideas:

*Direct connection between how kids feel and how they behave.*

## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

*When kids feel right, they'll behave right.*

*How do we help them to feel right?*

*By accepting their feelings!*

*Problem—Parents don't usually accept their children's feelings. For example:*

*"You don't really feel that way."*

*"You're just saying that because you're tired."*

*"There's no reason to be so upset."*

*Steady denial of feelings can confuse and enrage kids. Also teaches them not to know what their feelings are—not to trust them.*

After the session I remember thinking, "Maybe other parents do that. I don't." Then I started listening to myself. Here are some sample conversations from my home—just from a single day.

CHILD: Mommy, I'm tired.

ME: You couldn't be tired. You just napped.

CHILD: (*louder*) But I'm tired.

ME: You're not tired. You're just a little sleepy. Let's get dressed.

CHILD: (*wailing*) No, I'm tired!

CHILD: Mommy, it's hot in here.

ME: It's cold. Keep your sweater on.

CHILD: No, I'm hot.

ME: I said, "Keep your sweater on!"

CHILD: No, I'm hot.

CHILD: That TV show was boring.

ME: No, it wasn't. It was very interesting.

CHILD: It was stupid.

ME: It was educational.

CHILD: It stunk.

ME: Don't talk that way!

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

Can you see what was happening? Not only were all our conversations turning into arguments, I was also telling my children over and over again not to trust their own perceptions but to rely on mine instead.

Once I was aware of what I was doing, I was determined to change. But I wasn't sure how to go about it. What finally helped me most was actually putting myself in my children's shoes. I asked myself, "Suppose I were a child who was tired, or hot or bored? And suppose I wanted that all-important grown-up in my life to know what I was feeling . . . ?"

Over the next weeks I tried to tune in to what I thought my children might be experiencing, and when I did, my words seemed to follow naturally. I wasn't just using a technique. I really meant it when I said, "So you're still feeling tired—even though you just napped." Or "I'm cold, but for you it's hot in here." Or "I can see you didn't care much for that show." After all, we were two separate people, capable of having two different sets of feelings. Neither of us was right or wrong. We each felt what we felt.

For a while, my new skill was a big help. There was a noticeable reduction in the number of arguments between the children and me. Then one day my daughter announced, "I hate Grandma," and it was *my mother* she was talking about. I never hesitated for a second. "That is a terrible thing to say," I snapped. "You know you don't mean it. I don't ever want to hear that coming out of your mouth again."

That little exchange taught me something else about myself. I could be very accepting about most of the feelings the children had, but let one of them tell me something that made me angry or anxious and I'd instantly revert to my old way.

I've since learned that my reaction was not that unusual. On the following page you'll find examples of other statements children make that often lead to an automatic denial from their parents. Please read each statement and jot down what you think a parent might say if he were denying his child's feelings.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

I. CHILD: I don't like the new baby.

PARENT: (*denying the feeling*)

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II. CHILD: I had a dumb birthday party. (After you went "all out" to make it a wonderful day.)

PARENT: (*denying the feeling*)

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III. CHILD: I'm not wearing this stupid retainer anymore. It hurts. I don't care what the orthodontist says!

PARENT: (*denying the feeling*)

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IV. CHILD: I hate that new coach! Just because I was one minute late he kicked me off the team.

PARENT: (*denying the feeling*)

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Did you find yourself writing things like:

"That's not so. I know in your heart you really love the baby."

"What are you talking about? You had a wonderful party—ice cream, birthday cake, balloons. Well, that's the last party you'll ever have!"

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

“Your retainer can’t hurt that much. After all the money we’ve invested in your mouth, you’ll wear that thing whether you like it or not!”

“You have no right to be mad at the coach. It’s your fault. You should have been on time.”

Somehow this kind of talk comes easily to many of us. But how do children feel when they hear it? In order to get a sense of what it’s like to have one’s feelings dismissed, try the following exercise:

Imagine that you’re at work. Your employer asks you to do an extra job for him. He wants it ready by the end of the day. You mean to take care of it immediately, but because of a series of emergencies that come up you completely forget. Things are so hectic, you barely have time for your own lunch.

As you and a few coworkers are getting ready to go home, your boss comes over to you and asks for the finished piece of work. Quickly you try to explain how unusually busy you were today.

He interrupts you. In a loud, angry voice he shouts, “I’m not interested in your excuses! What the hell do you think I’m paying you for—to sit around all day on your butt?” As you open your mouth to speak, he says, “Save it,” and walks off to the elevator.

Your coworkers pretend not to have heard. You finish gathering your things and leave the office. On the way home you meet a friend. You’re still so upset that you find yourself telling him or her what had just taken place.

Your friend tries to “help” you in eight different ways. As you read each response, tune in to your immediate “gut” reaction and then write it down. (There are no right or wrong reactions. Whatever you feel is right for you.)

- I. *Denial of Feelings*: “There’s no reason to be so upset. It’s foolish to feel that way. You’re probably just tired and blowing the whole thing out of proportion. It can’t be

## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

as bad as you make it out to be. Come on, smile . . . You look so nice when you smile.”

Your reaction:

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II. *The Philosophical Response*: “Look, life is like that. Things don’t always turn out the way we want. You have to learn to take things in stride. In this world, nothing is perfect.”

Your reaction:

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III. *Advice*: “You know what I think you should do? Tomorrow morning go straight to your boss’s office and say, ‘Look, I was wrong.’ Then sit right down and finish that piece of work you neglected today. Don’t get trapped by those little emergencies that come up. And if you’re smart and you want to keep that job of yours, you’ll make sure nothing like that ever happens again.”

Your reaction:

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IV. *Questions*: “What exactly were those emergencies you had that would cause you to forget a special request from your boss?”

“Didn’t you realize he’d be angry if you didn’t get to it immediately?”



## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

“Has this ever happened before?”

“Why didn’t you follow him when he left the room and try to explain again?”

Your reaction:

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V. *Defense of the Other Person*: “I can understand your boss’s reaction. He’s probably under terrible pressure. You’re lucky he doesn’t lose his temper more often.”

Your reaction:

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VI. *Pity*: “Oh, you poor thing. That is terrible! I feel so sorry for you, I could just cry.”

Your reaction:

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VII. *Amateur Psychoanalysis*: “Has it ever occurred to you that the real reason you’re so upset by this is because your employer represents a father figure in your life? As a child you probably worried about displeasing your father, and when your boss scolded you it brought back your early fears of rejection. Isn’t that true?”

Your reaction:

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## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

VIII. *An Empathic Response* (an attempt to tune into the feelings of another): “Boy, that sounds like a rough experience. To be subjected to an attack like that in front of other people, especially after having been under so much pressure, must have been pretty hard to take!”

Your reaction:

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You’ve just been exploring your own reactions to some fairly typical ways that people talk. Now I’d like to share with you some of my personal reactions. When I’m upset or hurting, the last thing I want to hear is advice, philosophy, psychology, or the other fellow’s point of view. That kind of talk makes me only feel worse than before. Pity leaves me feeling pitiful; questions put me on the defensive; and most infuriating of all is to hear that I have no reason to feel what I’m feeling. My overriding reaction to most of these responses is “Oh, forget it. . . . What’s the point of going on?”

But let someone really listen, let someone acknowledge my inner pain and give me a chance to talk more about what’s troubling me, and I begin to feel less upset, less confused, more able to cope with my feelings and my problem.

I might even say to myself, “My boss is usually fair. . . . I suppose I should have taken care of that report immediately. . . . But I still can’t overlook what he did. . . . Well, I’ll go in early tomorrow and write that report first thing in the morning. . . . But when I bring it to his office I’ll let him know how upsetting it was for me to be spoken to in that way. . . . And I’ll also let him know that, from now on, if he has any criticism I would appreciate being told privately.”

The process is no different for our children. They too can help themselves if they have a listening ear and an empathic

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

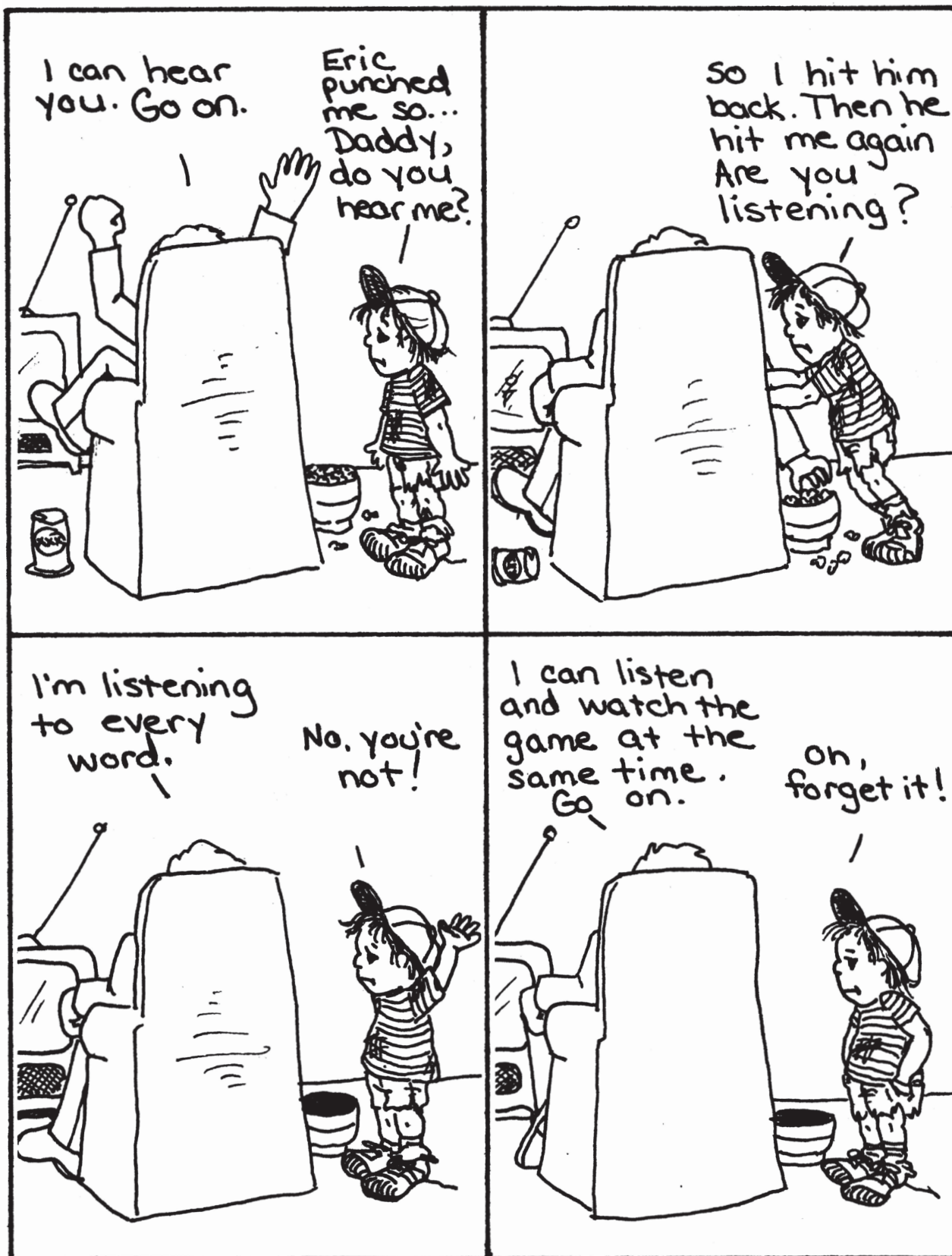
response. But the language of empathy does not come naturally to us. It's not part of our "mother tongue." Most of us grew up having our feelings denied. To become fluent in this new language of acceptance, we have to learn and practice its methods. Here are some ways to help children deal with their feelings.

### TO HELP WITH FEELINGS

1. Listen with full attention.
2. Acknowledge their feelings with a word—"Oh" . . . "Mmm" . . . "I see."
3. Give their feelings a name.
4. Give them their wishes in fantasy.

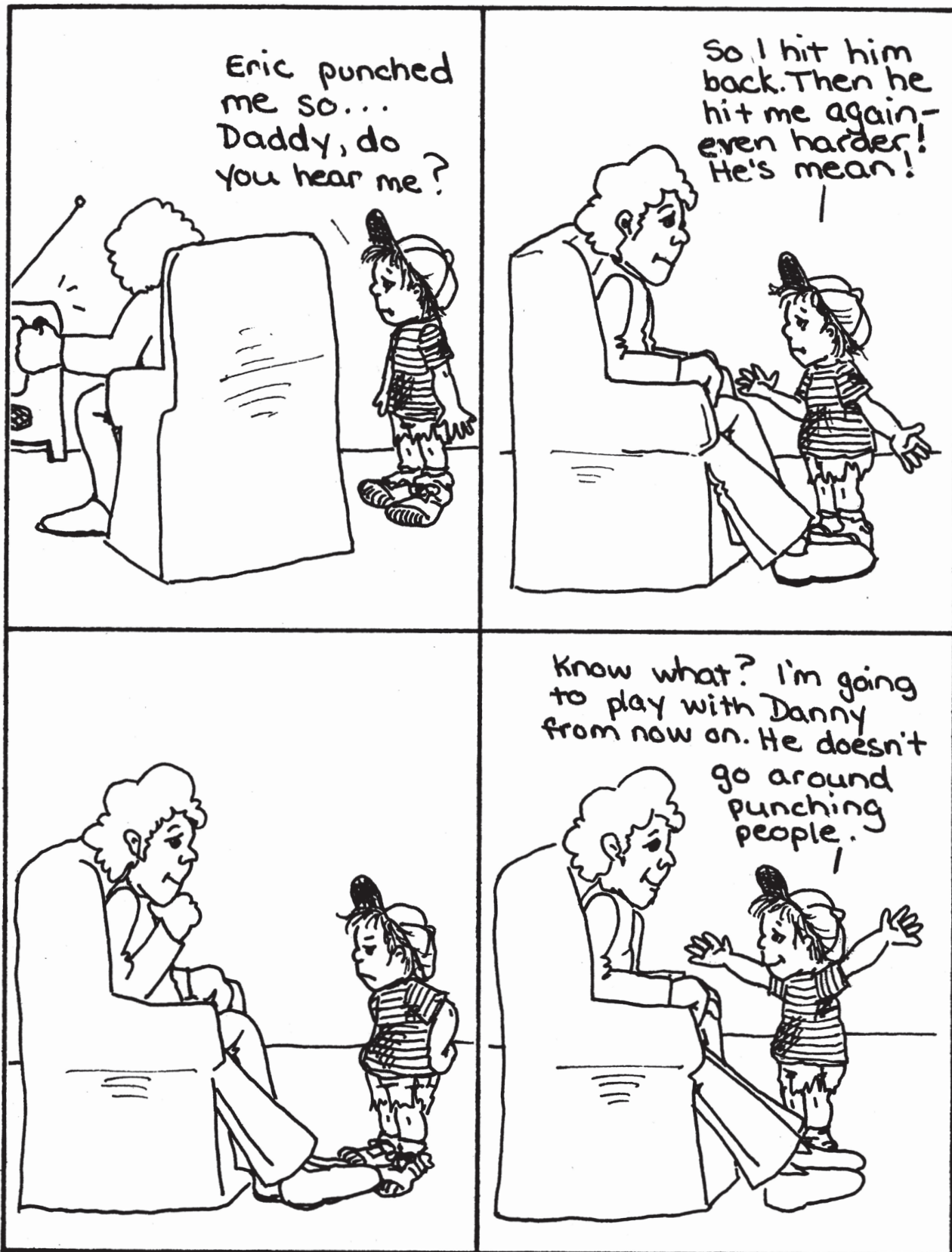
On the next few pages you'll see the contrast between these methods and the ways that people usually respond to a child who is in distress.

INSTEAD OF HALF LISTENING,



It can be discouraging to try to get through to someone who gives only lip service to listening.

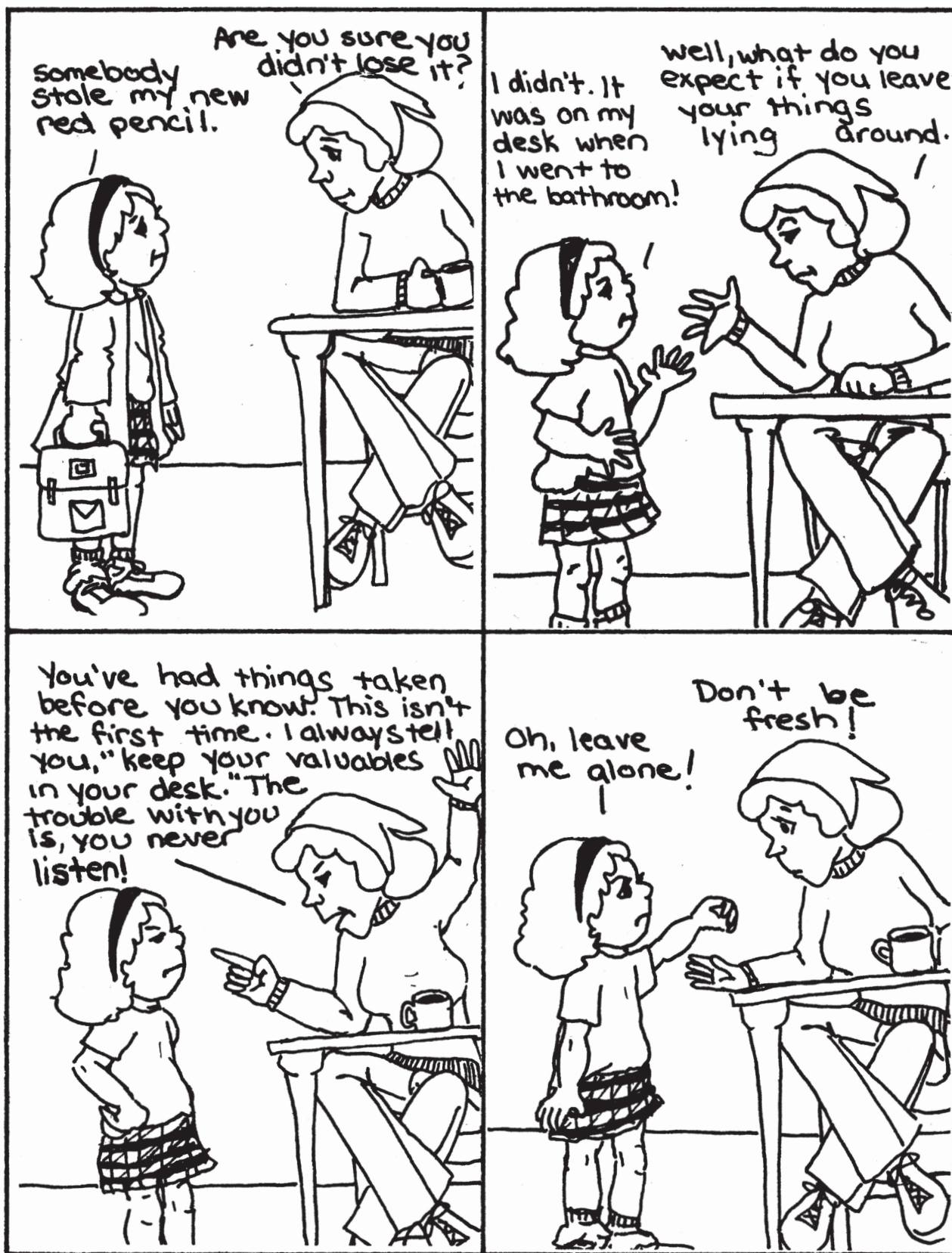
I. LISTEN WITH FULL ATTENTION.



It's much easier to tell your troubles to a parent who is really listening. Sometimes a sympathetic silence is all a child needs.

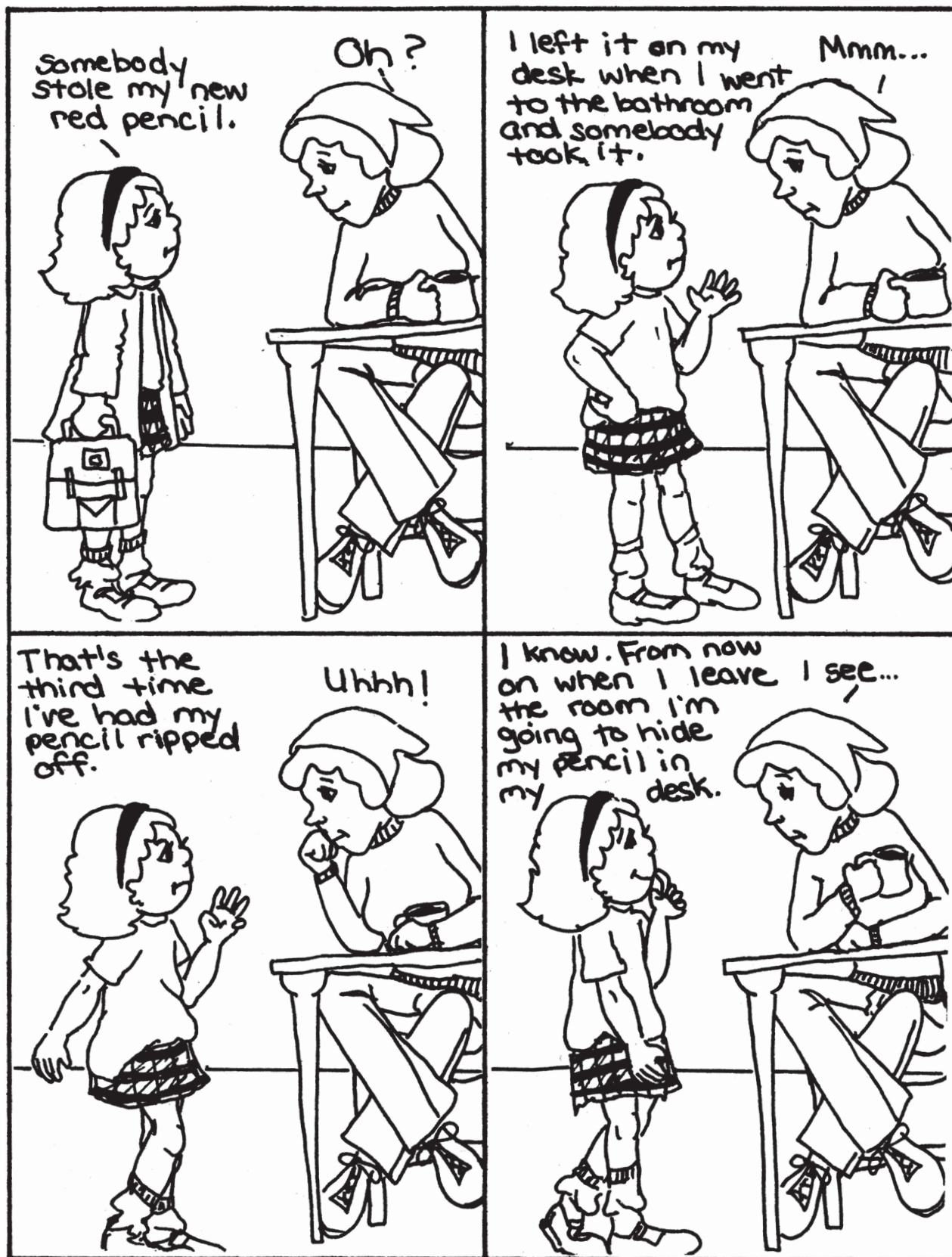


INSTEAD OF QUESTIONS AND ADVICE,



It's hard for a child to think clearly or constructively when someone is questioning, blaming, or advising her.

II. ACKNOWLEDGE WITH A WORD—"Oh . . . mmm . . . I see."



There's a lot of help to be had from a simple "Oh . . . mmm . . ." or "I see." Words like these, coupled with a caring attitude, are invitations to a child to explore her own thoughts and feelings, and possibly come up with her own solutions.

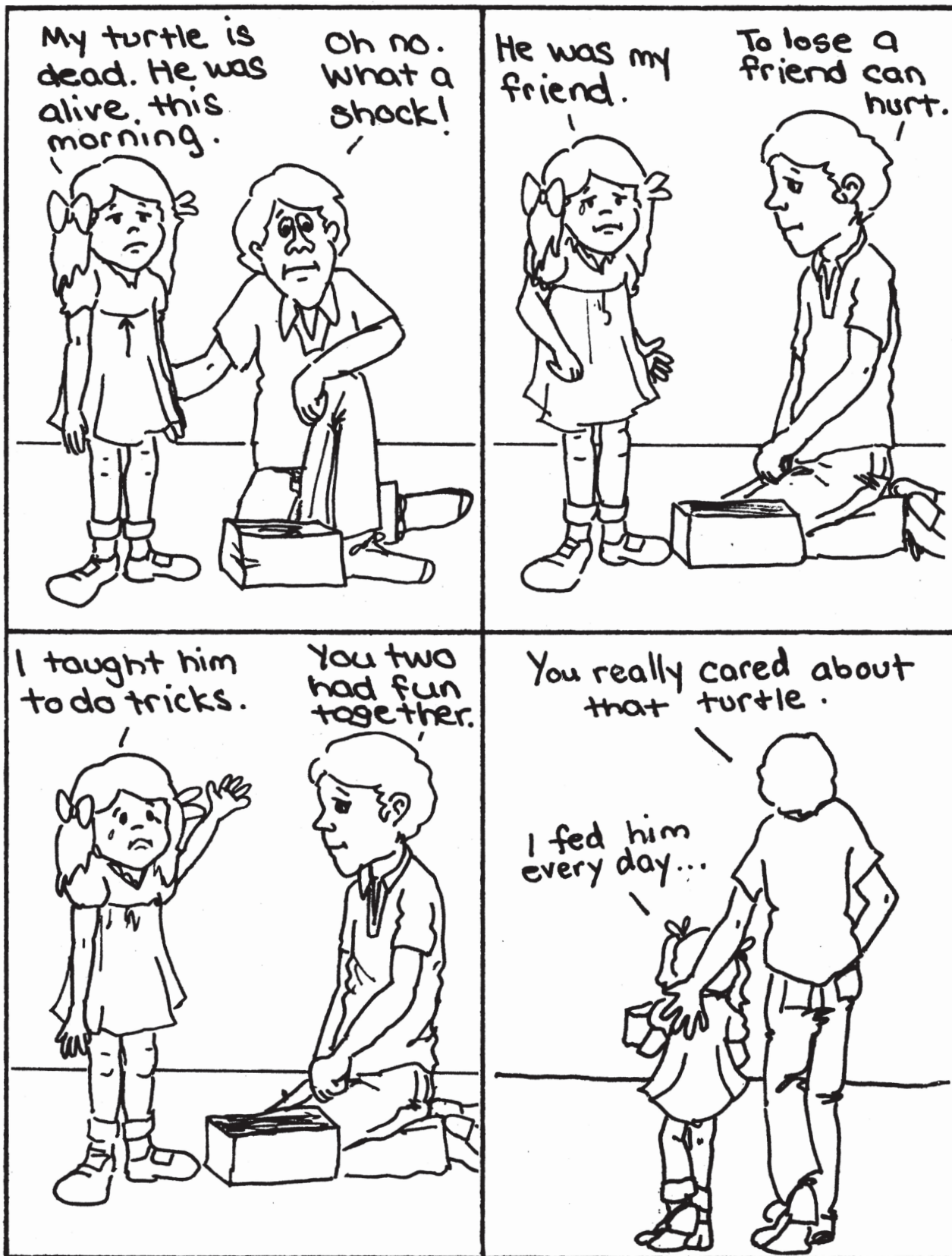
INSTEAD OF DENYING THE FEELING,



It's strange. When we urge a child to push a bad feeling away—however kindly—the child seems to get only more upset.

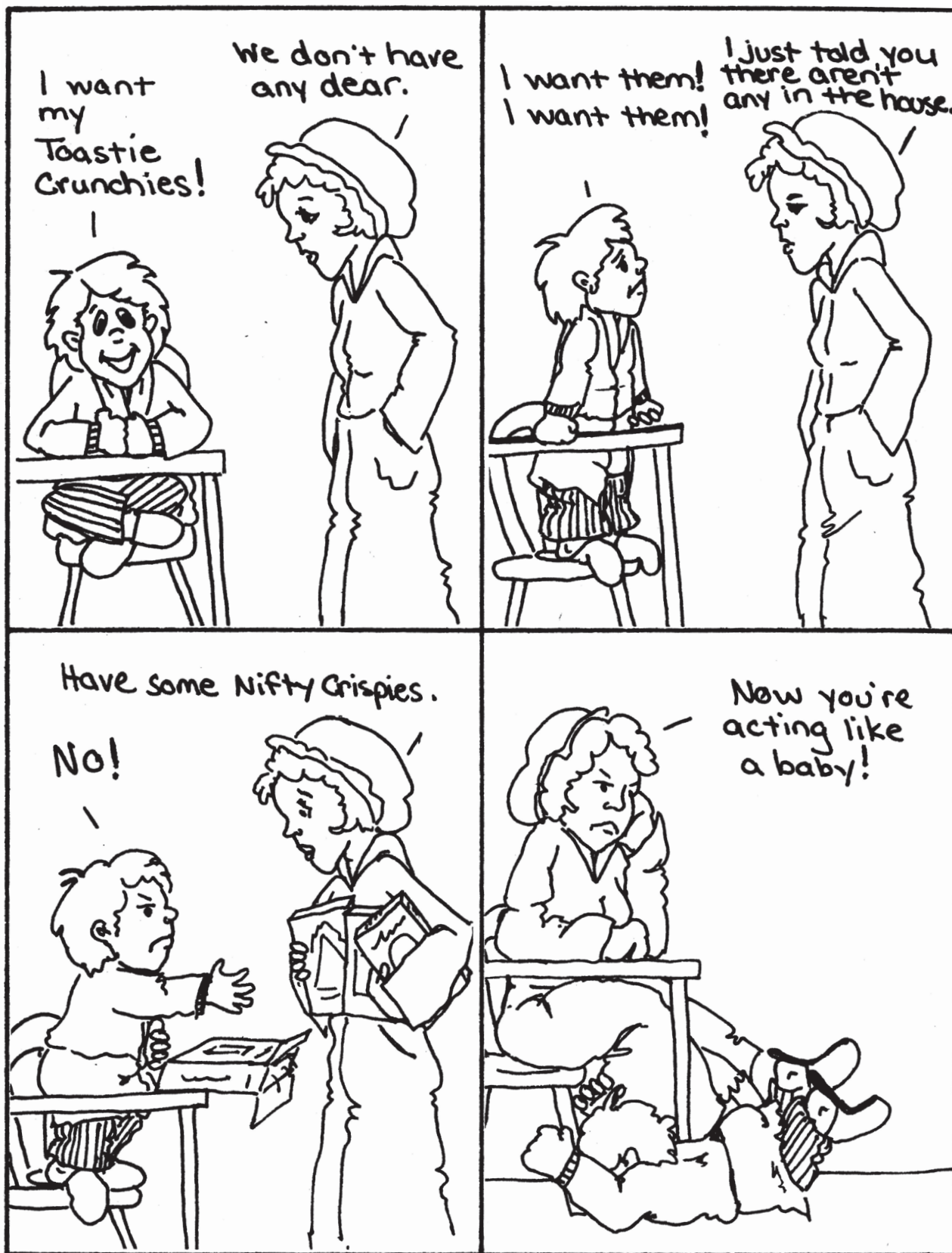


III. GIVE THE FEELING A NAME.



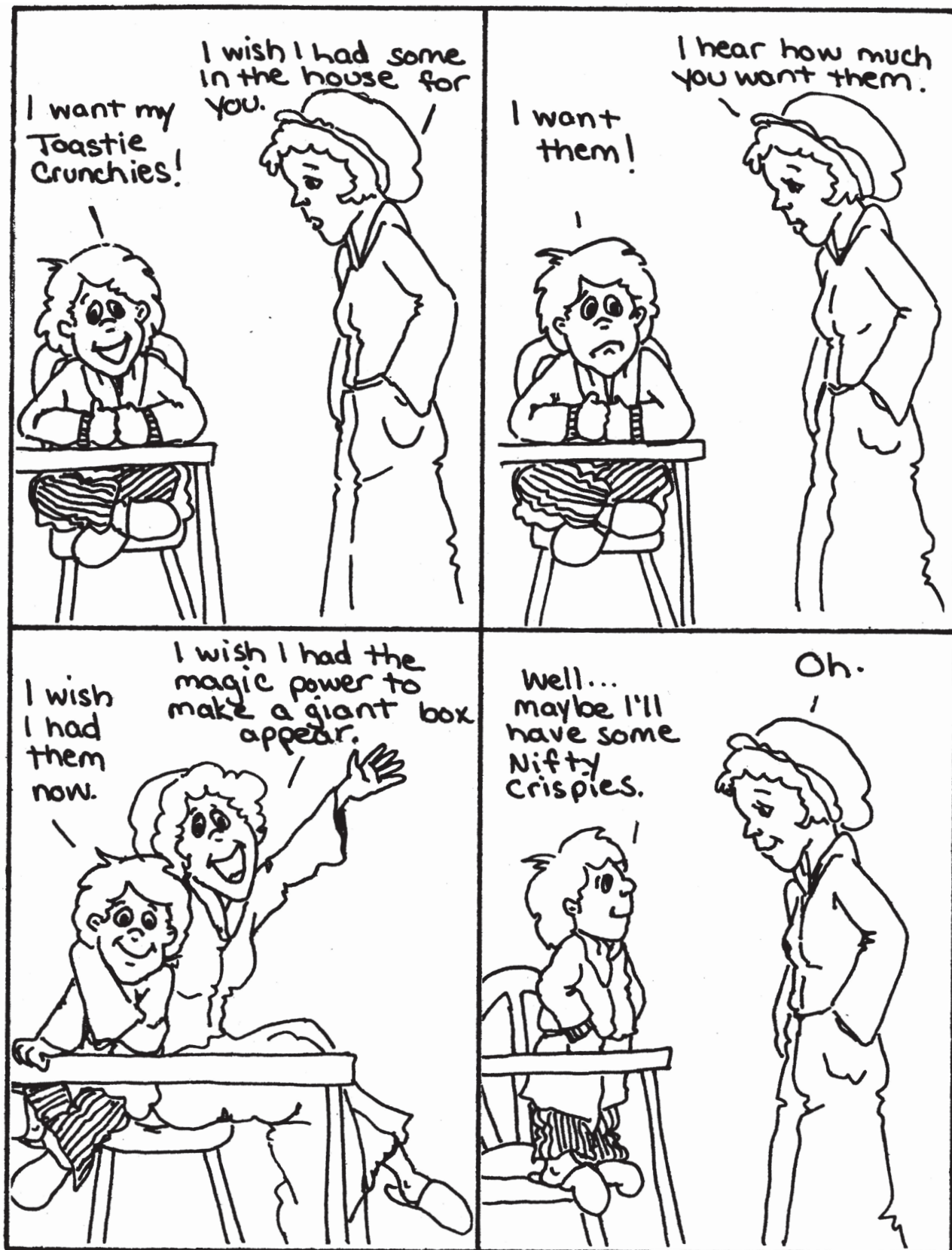
Parents don't usually give this kind of response, because they fear that by giving a name to the feeling they'll make it worse. Just the opposite is true. The child who hears the words for what she is experiencing is deeply comforted. Someone has acknowledged her inner experience.

INSTEAD OF EXPLANATION AND LOGIC,



When children want something they can't have, adults usually respond with logical explanations of why they can't have it. Often, the harder we explain, the harder they protest.

IV. GIVE A CHILD HIS WISHES IN FANTASY.



Sometimes just having someone understand how much you want something makes reality easier to bear.



## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

So there you have it—four possible ways to give first aid to a child in distress: by listening with full attention, by acknowledging his feelings with a word, by giving a name to his feelings, and by granting him his wishes in fantasy.

But more important than any words we use is our attitude. If our attitude is not one of compassion, then whatever we say will be experienced by the child as phony or manipulative. It is when our words are infused with our real feelings of empathy that they speak directly to a child's heart.

Of the four skills you've just seen illustrated, perhaps the most difficult is to have to listen to a child's emotional outpourings and then "give a name to the feeling." It takes practice and concentration to be able to look into and beyond what a child says in order to identify what he or she might be feeling. Yet it's important that we give our children a vocabulary for their inner reality. Once they have the words for what they're experiencing, they can begin to help themselves.

This next exercise has a list of six statements that a child might make to her parents. Please read each statement and figure out:

1. A word or two that describe what the child might be feeling.
2. A statement you might make to the child to show you understand the feeling.

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

### ACKNOWLEDGING FEELINGS

	A word that describes what he or she might be feeling.	Use the word in a statement that shows you understand the feeling. (Don't question or give advice.)
The child says.		

<b>EXAMPLE:</b> “The bus driver yelled at me and everybody laughed.”	<u>Embarrassment</u>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">That must have been</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">embarrassing</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">(or)</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">Sounds as if that</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">was embarrassing</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">_____</td></tr> </table>	_____	That must have been	_____	embarrassing	_____	(or)	_____	Sounds as if that	_____	was embarrassing	_____
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That must have been													
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Sounds as if that													
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1. “I’d like to punch that Michael in the nose!”	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
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2. “Just because of a little rain my teacher said we couldn’t go on our field trip. She’s dumb.”	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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3. “Mary invited me to her party, but I don’t know. . . .”	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
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4. “I don’t know why teachers have to load you down with so much home-work over the weekend!”	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

5. “We had  
basketball prac-  
tice today and  
I couldn’t sink  
that ball once.”

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6. “Janey is  
moving away  
and she’s my  
best friend.”

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Did you notice how much thought and effort it takes to let a child know you have a sense of what it is he or she might be feeling? For most of us it doesn’t come naturally to say things like:

- “Boy, you sound angry!” or
- “That must have been a disappointment for you,” or
- “Hmm. You seem to be having some doubts about going to that party,” or
- “Sounds as if you really resent all that homework,” or
- “Oh, that must have been so frustrating!” or
- “To have a dear friend move away can be pretty upsetting.”

And yet it’s statements like these that give children comfort and free them to begin to deal with their problems. (By the way, don’t worry about using words that are too big. The easiest way to learn a new word is to hear it used in context.)

You may be thinking, “Well, in this exercise I was able to give an initial response that showed I understood—more or less. But where would the conversation go from there? How would I continue? Is it okay to give advice next?”

Hold off on giving advice. I know how tempting it is to try to solve a child’s problem with an immediate solution:

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

“Ma, I’m tired.”

“Then lie down and rest.”

“I’m hungry.”

“Then eat something.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“Then don’t eat.”

Resist the temptation to “make better” instantly. Instead of giving advice, continue to accept and reflect on your child’s feelings.

Here’s an example of what I mean. A father in our group reported that his young son came storming into the house with the first statement you worked on in your workbooks: “I’d like to punch that Michael in the nose!”

The father said, “Normally the conversation would have gone like this:”

SON: I’d like to punch that Michael in the nose!

FATHER: Why? What happened?

SON: He threw my notebook in the dirt!

FATHER: Well, did you do something to him first?

SON: No!

FATHER: Are you sure?

SON: I swear, I never touched him.

FATHER: Well, Michael is your friend. If you take my advice, you’ll forget about the whole thing. You’re not so perfect, you know. Sometimes you start up and then blame someone else—the way you do with your brother.

SON: No, I don’t. He starts up with me first . . . Oh, I can’t talk to you.

But the father had just attended a workshop on helping his children deal with their feelings, and this is what actually took place:

## How to Talk So Kids Will Listen . . .

- SON: I'd like to punch that Michael in the nose!
- FATHER: Boy, you're angry!
- SON: I'd like to push his fat face in!
- FATHER: You're *that* mad at him!
- SON: You know what that bully did? He grabbed my notebook at the bus stop and threw it in the dirt. And for no reason!
- FATHER: Hmmm!
- SON: I bet he thought I was the one who broke his dumb clay bird in the art room.
- FATHER: You think so.
- SON: Yeah, he kept looking at me all the time he was crying.
- FATHER: Oh.
- SON: But I didn't break it. I didn't!
- FATHER: You *know* you didn't.
- SON: Well, I didn't do it on purpose! I couldn't help it if that stupid Debby pushed me into the table.
- FATHER: So Debby pushed you.
- SON: Yeah. A lot of things got knocked down, but the only thing that broke was the bird. I didn't mean to break it. His bird was good.
- FATHER: You really didn't mean to break it.
- SON: No, but he wouldn't believe me.
- FATHER: You don't think he'd believe you if you told him the truth.
- SON: I dunno . . . I'm gonna tell him anyway—whether he believes me or not. And I think he should tell me he's sorry for throwing my notebook in the dirt!

The father was astonished. He hadn't asked questions and yet the child had told him the whole story. He hadn't given one word of advice, and yet the child had worked out his own solution. It seemed unbelievable to him that he could have been so helpful to his son just by listening and acknowledging his feelings.



## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

It's one thing to do a written exercise and read a model dialogue. It's another to put listening skills into action in a real situation with our own children. Parents in our groups report that it's helpful to role-play with one another and get a little practice before dealing with actual situations in their own homes.

On the following page you'll find a role-playing exercise to try with a friend or spouse. Decide which of you will play the child and which will play the parent. Then read only your part.

### **Child's Situation**

*(Role-Playing)*

I. The doctor said that you have an allergy and need to have shots every week so that you won't sneeze so much. Sometimes the shots are painful and sometimes you hardly feel them at all. The shot you had today was the kind that really hurt. After you leave the doctor's office, you want your parents to know how it felt.

Your parent will respond to you in two different ways. The first time, your feelings will be denied, but keep trying to get your parent to understand anyway. When the conversation comes to a natural conclusion, ask yourself what your feelings were and share your answer with the person who is role-playing with you.

Start the scene by rubbing your arm and saying,

*"The doctor nearly killed me with that shot!"*

II. The situation is the same, only this time your parent will respond differently. Again, when the conversation comes to a natural conclusion ask yourself what your feelings were this time and share your answer.

Begin the scene in the same way, by saying,

*"The doctor nearly killed me with that shot!"*

**When you've played the scene twice, you might want**

**to reverse roles so that you can experience the parent's point of view.**

**Parent's Situation**  
*(Role-Playing)*

I. You have to take your child for allergy shots every week. Although you know your youngster dreads going, you also know that most of the time the shots just hurt for a second. Today, after leaving the doctor's office your child complains bitterly.

You'll be playing the scene twice. The first time, try to get your child to stop complaining by denying his or her feelings. Use the following statements (if you like, you can make up some of your own):

*"Come on, it can't hurt that much."*

*"You're making a big fuss over nothing."*

*"Your brother never complains when he has a shot."*

*"You're acting like a baby."*

*"Well, you'd better get used to those shots. After all, you're going to have to get them every week."*

When the conversation comes to a natural conclusion, ask yourself what your feelings were and share your answer with the person who is role-playing with you.

Your child will start the scene.

II. The scene is the same, only this time you will really listen.

Your responses will show that you can both hear and accept whatever feelings your child might express. For example:

*"Sounds as if it really hurt."*

*"Mmmm, that bad!"*

*"Wouldn't it be great if someone would discover a pain-free way to treat allergies?"*

*"It's not easy to get these shots week after week. I bet you'll be glad when they're over."*

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

When the conversation comes to a natural conclusion, ask yourself what your feelings were this time and share your answer.

Your child will start the scene again.

**When you've played the scene twice, you might want to reverse roles so that you can experience the child's point of view.**

When you played the child whose feelings were brushed aside and denied, did you find yourself becoming more and more angry? Did you start out being upset about your shot and end up being mad at your parent?

When you played the parent who tried to stop the complaining, did you find yourself getting more and more irritated with your "unreasonable" child?

That's usually the way it goes when feelings are denied. Parents and children become increasingly hostile toward each other.

Parent, when you were accepting of your child's feelings, did you sense the fight going out of your interchange? Did you experience your power to be genuinely helpful?

Child, when your feelings were accepted, did you feel more respected? More loving toward your parent? Was the pain easier to bear when someone knew how much it hurt? Could you face it again next week?

When we acknowledge a child's feelings, we do him a great service. We put him in touch with his inner reality. And once he's clear about that reality, he gathers the strength to begin to cope.

### ASSIGNMENT

At least once this week have a conversation with a child in which you accept his or her feelings. Jot down what was said while it's still fresh in your mind.

*A Quick Reminder . . .*

**Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings**

Children Need to Have Their Feelings  
Accepted and Respected.

1. YOU CAN LISTEN QUIETLY AND ATTENTIVELY.  
  
“Oh . . . Mmm . . . I see . . .”
3. YOU CAN GIVE THE FEELING A NAME.  
  
“That sounds frustrating!”
4. YOU CAN GIVE THE CHILD HIS WISHES IN FANTASY.  
  
“I wish I could make the banana ripe for you  
right now!”

• • •

All feelings can be accepted.  
Certain actions must be limited.

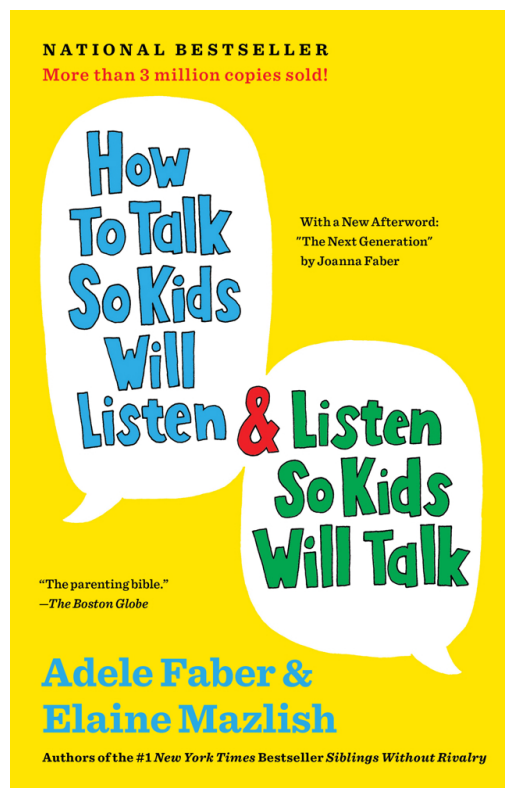
“I can see how angry you are at your brother.  
Tell him what you want with words, not fists.”

Note: You may find it useful to make a copy of this and other “reminder” pages and put them up in strategic locations around the house.

# How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk

30th Anniversary Edition

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish



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A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

1230 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10020

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Afterword to 1999 edition by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

Afterword to 2012 edition by Joanna Faber.

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First Scribner edition February 2012

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Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Control Number: 80051248

ISBN 978-1-4516-6388-4

ISBN 978-1-4516-6389-1 (ebook)