

# Children's Mental Health Week 5th – 11th February 2024

## My Voice Matters



**BCCS**

a children's charity for  
Essex and East London

### *For parents and carers*

We know we can be naturally distracted when our children are talking to us. It is vital to your child's ego, their sense of self, and their belief in their own self-efficacy that we really invest in and listen to them. So, how do we show and allow our children to feel confident in our ability to hear them: to essentially model to them that their voice matters to you? Below are some basic counselling techniques to help. As an aside, we find talking to children whilst sitting alongside them can be more effective than sitting directly opposite them.



- Active listening: it sounds so simple to say it, but it takes commitment to be fully present in a conversation! But doing so enables you to fully concentrate on what is being said and, perhaps, tune into what isn't being said.
- Summarise: giving a short acknowledgement of what was said, i.e., "you say you've had a tough day, it sounds like it" allows your child to feel fully heard and validated.
- Empathise: empathic responses such as, "I can see how difficult that was for you", or "I hear it made you feel really angry", helps your child to feel heard and, most importantly, understood. We don't have to "get it", but empathy is all about walking in another's shoes and seeing things through their lens. It is a powerful thing to do for your child.



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Brentwood Catholic Children's Society - Registered Charity Number: 1000661

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### *For parents and carers (continued)*

- Verbal encouragement: repeating or echoing the last few words of your child's sentences when they pause, can encourage them to keep talking. For example, "you had fun ...", or "you were frustrated ..." and they'll likely feel your encouragement and give you more. The more your children talk about their feelings, the better!
- Be curious:
  - "Tell me more..."
  - "I loved hearing about ...",
  - "That sounds really ..., tell me how it went?"
  - "What do you think about ...?"
  - "What did you feel when ...?"
- Don't try to fix or solve: it is a real challenge when your child is distressed, worried or angry about something. Our natural urge may be to fix things and you may hear yourself saying, "you should do this", or "say this ...". but the reality is there are things we can't fix. We are a far more powerful ally when we acknowledge this, and ask instead, how you can help them manage it/the situation/the feeling.



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