

# RULES FOR WHEN YOUR CHILD OR PARTNER IS UPSET

- **Notice and show you care** – “You ok? You seem a little down. Anything you want to talk about?”
- **No minimizing the situation** – “This isn’t a big deal”
- **No minimizing their emotions** – “You are over-reacting, this isn’t worth getting upset about.”
- **No correcting their emotions** – “You should be mad not sad!”
- **Validate their feelings** – “I can see why you would feel frustrated by... I would be too!”
- **Help them unpack their feelings by inquiring about 3-5 emotions using emotion list** – “Are you feeling frustrated because...?”, “It must be so overwhelming to see..., is it?”
- **No problem solving.** If you have an idea, after the entire conversation is over you can say something like “I have an idea on how to fix XYZ, let me know later if you want to talk about it”. In other words, give them an easy out to NOT ask you for advice.
- **No siding with the enemy.** Try to find at least some small way of being on their side. If you can’t, don’t comment and just listening quietly.
- **No cheering them up.** That leaves the experience unprocessed which will continue to cause problems for them.
- **Don’t say or imply “Look at the bright side”/“Count your blessings”/“It’s going to be fine”**  
It will probably be fine but that isn’t the point. The point is to help them process their hurtful experience.
- **Don’t say or imply “Others have it worse”** – “This is nothing compared to ....”
- **Don’t criticize** – “Why did you say ...?”
- **No switching the conversation over to another topic or to yourself.** Keep the focus on their issues and feelings. It’s ok for the sharer to switch the subject.
- **Don’t get defensive.** It isn’t about you. Let slights go. Just listen.
- **Don’t ask leading questions that imply a solution like** “Why didn’t you just walk away at that point?”
- **Give them Oxytocin** (e.g. hugs, pat on the back, fix a collar, squeeze their hand/shoulder)

Pressured Scared Defensive Worried Worthless Stupid Disrespected Excluded Threatened Nervous Misunderstood	Depressed Lonely Abandoned Unimportant Hopeless Guilty Ashamed Disappointed Embarrassed Ugly Small
Angry Let down Humiliated Betrayed Jealous Frustrated Annoyed Disgust Contempt	Bored Stressed Tired Overwhelmed
	Surprised Confused Bullied Down Unloved
Curious Confident Courageous Loving Inspired Brave Joy Smart Powerful Wanted Excited Romantic Creative Thoughtful Amazed Generous Accepting Relieved	Proud Respected Peaceful Optimistic Playful Thankful Daring Appreciated Satisfied Honored Amused Helpful Anticipating Moved Respectful Content Popular

## DON'T USE (TOO BROAD)

Happy	Mad
Sad	Bad