

Nourish Your Child With the Gift of Listening [part 2]

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Genuinely listening to and validating your child's feelings is one of the fundamental skills and building blocks of the **conscious parenting** approach. The value and importance of effective listening, in my opinion, should not be underestimated. This skill entails that you, the parent, recognize, accept, acknowledge, and validate your child's feelings and experience.

Effective listening is discussed and described in numerous parenting books and programs and in most books about communication. In the "How to Talk So Kids will Listen and Listen So Kids will Talk" series of books for parents by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, the authors describe this skill in a way that is clear and user-friendly.

In advocating this skill of listening to and validating your child's feelings, I assume the following:

First, as discussed in part one in this series of articles [**Nourish Your Child with the Gift of Listening**], I assume that all of us, and especially our children, have a deep need to feel heard and understood.

Second, I assume that there's a connection between how kids feel and how they act. That is, there is a connection between a child's emotional state and his or her conduct and behavior. As the well-known child psychologist and parent expert Dr. Haim Ginott stated, "when kids feel right, they'll behave right."

Third, each day, and every moment, children [and you] experience a continuous flow of different feeling states. Feelings are dynamic; feelings change and shift.

Fourth, my preferred way to help children feel right and feel better about themselves is by accepting and validating their present feelings. I notice that, over time, this is associated with their behaving more appropriately.

Fifth, it is much easier for your child to learn, think, and to absorb material when your child is feeling right [good, calm, okay]. There's an optimal arousal level for learning - not comatose, and not hyper – and this often follows from feeling right.

As parents and teachers you can optimize the child's ability to learn by creating a climate conducive to learning. An effective first step to creating this climate is listening to your child. Through being heard, your child often feels "right" and then is able to move on. Take for example a child who is feeling bothered and upset by his sibling. You, the child's parent, acknowledge and validate the child's

feeling upset and distress. The child then feels heard, lets go and processes his or her emotion, and then moves on and gets unstuck.
