

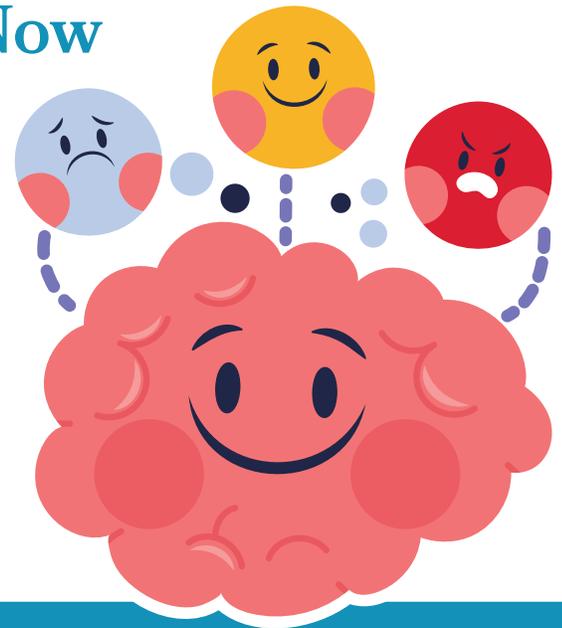
Help Your Child Learn and Talk About Feelings: Going Beyond the Here-and-Now

You've probably heard that talking to your child is critical for their language development. **But did you know that what you talk about when you respond to your child has an important influence on their later mental health?**

An important way that your child learns about emotions and develops the language skills that support their mental health is during conversations with you that go beyond the here-and-now.

Researchers have been studying the relationship between children's language and mental health, and found that having strong language skills supports children's ability to:

- Recognize emotions in themselves and others
- Talk about emotions, and
- Use strategies to help manage their emotions, such as thinking about their past experiences and imagining things in the future.



Talking beyond the “here-and-now”

Talking beyond the here-and-now means helping your child to think about ideas beyond what is happening in the moment. It includes talking about feelings, providing explanations for why things happen, as well as talking about past events and things in the future.

Teddy

You're feeling **worried** about your teddy bear.

Feelings

Talk about how your child feels and how others feel

You miss Teddy **because he is being washed.**

Explanations

Talk about the cause and effect of your child's feelings

Teddy got dirty **when you were having fun at the park today.**

Recent Past

Talk about your child's recent experiences and emotions

After Teddy's bath is done, **you will both be happier!**

Near Future

Talk about how your child's feelings will change in the future



You can help your child learn about feelings in natural, everyday moments such as **daily routines, reading books, and play time.**

Let's look at an example of a real-life interaction you may have experienced:



Here we have Alisha, who is enjoying an ice cream cone with her dad...



...but suddenly the ice cream falls to the ground! Alisha **looks at her dad** and **is about to cry**



Alisha's dad might start by saying something like, **"Oh no, your ice cream fell!"** to respond to her.

It's natural to respond to your child by describing the current situation. But there is much more to say! To help your child develop the skills they need to understand and manage their emotions there is more you could talk about.

Alisha's dad could talk about ideas that go beyond the here-and-now, and **you can use these concepts to help build your child's understanding too!** For example:

Talk about your child's **FEELINGS**

"I can see you're upset about your ice cream."

Add an **EXPLANATION** for your child's feelings

"I don't blame you for being upset because that was delicious ice cream."

Talk about your child's feelings in the **RECENT PAST**

"You were upset yesterday at the park when the swing was broken and you couldn't use it."

Relate your child's feelings to the **NEAR FUTURE**

"We'll get another ice cream cone at the other store on the way home and then you'll feel better."

Remember, your child may not understand everything you say right away. Talking about ideas beyond the here-and-now helps children understand and put words to their feelings. It also shows them how they can manage their different emotions – an important skill for life!



The strategies in this handout are drawn from the **Hanen It Takes Two to Talk® guidebook.** Learn more about how this guidebook can help you help your child communicate at www.hanen.org/ITTTguidebook