

# SAY YOU'RE SORRY... AND MEAN IT!



## DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY

Children can begin to recognize empathy by reaching two crucial developmental milestones:

- Learning to identify their own feelings
- Developing their sense of self

## HOW DO WE DO THAT?

- To help them identify their own feelings, read them books, look at images of emotions on faces, use the children's names and have conversations with them.
- To help them develop their sense of self, try labeling items in the class with their name and picture and support conflict resolution with them.



Children's brains have not developed enough to fully comprehend empathy.

## OUR BRAIN ON FEELINGS

**The pre-frontal cortex:** in charge of decision-making (reaches maturity in our 20s & 30s).

**The limbic system:** home to our emotional functions and some of children's actions.

**The brain stem:** flight/fright/freeze happens here and drives many of children's actions.

## WHY?

To say sorry (and mean it!) implies that:

- You know what you did.
- You know why it was wrong.
- AND you don't intend to do it again.

Why forcing children to apologize doesn't work:

- Children don't yet understand the connection between what they did and why they did it!



## BE CONSISTENT!

We can help children develop this skill by modeling **HOW** to use "sorry" when it's real.

Remember: children's actions most often come from their **brain stem & limbic system.**

Take a deep breath... **children will apologize in their own way!**

## REFLECT

When someone tells you "I'm sorry" try saying "Thank you for your apology."

Not only does this acknowledge that you accept the apology, it also sheds light on the value of your relationship.

**What a difference this makes!**



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