

Social & Emotional Intelligence

Skills for learning
5–9yrs olds

*“Learning to listen with the
whole body.”*



LISTEN.
LISTEN...

Module 1: Listening – Using the Whole Body Technique

Listening is one of the most fundamental skills children need to succeed—not just in school, but in life. However, true listening goes beyond just hearing words. It's about engaging the whole body: ears, eyes, mouth, brain, and heart. In this module, we'll guide parents in teaching their children how to listen actively and attentively using fun, simple techniques that are easy to apply at home.

This module includes six lessons, each designed to break down the key elements of listening. Each lesson provides:

- An introduction to the topic to help parents explain the skill to their child.
- A clear explanation of what the skill means, how it works, and why it's important.
- Engaging exercises and activities in a child-friendly workbook to reinforce the learning.

By the end of this module, parents will feel equipped to teach their children how to listen with their whole body, while children will develop a deeper understanding of what it means to truly pay attention.

Lesson Topics

- 1. Listening with Your Ears: Children learn to actively use their ears to hear instructions, sounds, and tones of voice, focusing on understanding the message.**
- 2. Listening with Your Eyes: Discover how looking at the speaker helps children focus on nonverbal cues like facial expressions and body language, enhancing their understanding.**
- 3. Keeping Your Mouth Quiet: Teach children how to practice self-control by staying silent while someone else is speaking, ensuring they don't miss important information.**
- 4. Keeping Your Body Still Help children understand the connection between calm, still bodies and active listening, creating a focused environment.**
- 5. Using Your Brain to Think Introduce the concept of processing what they hear, asking thoughtful questions, and understanding why thinking is key to listening.**
- 6. Using Your Heart: Explore empathy in listening—helping children understand the emotions behind the words, creating a deeper connection to the speaker.**

Through these lessons, parents and children will engage in meaningful, practical exercises that make listening fun and impactful. We have a printable workbook with activities which will ensure these skills become second nature to your child.

Lesson 1: Listening with Your Ears

The aim of this session is to teach children aged 5–9 the skill of active listening by focusing on understanding words, tone, and emotional cues. This foundational skill helps children enhance their communication, strengthen relationships, and develop emotional regulation by integrating the logical and emotional aspects of their brains.

1. Introduction to the Topic

“Listening is like using your superpower to understand what someone is saying. Did you know that your ears help you pick up more than just words? They can also hear feelings in someone’s voice, like if they’re happy, sad, or excited. We’re going to learn how to use our ears to become amazing listeners!”

Parent Note: In *The Whole-Brain Child*, Dr. Dan Siegel emphasizes integrating the different parts of the brain—especially the logical left brain and the emotional right brain. Teaching children to listen carefully helps develop the "upstairs brain" (responsible for critical thinking and self-regulation) and connects it to the "downstairs brain" (responsible for survival instincts and emotions). By teaching your child to focus on words, tone, and intent, you’re helping them integrate their emotional and logical responses, a crucial skill for long-term emotional regulation and communication.

2. What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It’s Important

Listening with your ears means paying attention to the sounds and words someone is saying. It also means hearing the tone of their voice, like when someone sounds upset or excited.



How It Works:?

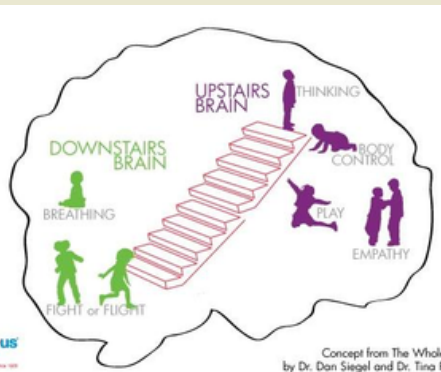
- Focus on the person who is talking.
- Listen carefully to the words and the tone of their voice.
- Avoid letting other noises or distractions get in the way.
- Repeat the instructions in your head or out loud to check if you understood.

Whole-Brain Connection: When children practice listening with their ears, they engage the prefrontal cortex (part of the "upstairs brain") to focus attention and interpret tone. This strengthens their ability to respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively, helping them become better communicators.

Why It's Important:

Listening with your ears helps you understand instructions, stories, and how people feel. It also shows respect and helps you build good relationships with friends, teachers, and family members. If you listen well, you won't miss important details or make mistakes because you didn't hear correctly.

Whole-Brain Connection: Teaching active listening connects the left brain's logic (understanding words) with the right brain's emotional awareness (interpreting tone). According to Siegel, this integration helps children process social cues, regulate their emotions, and feel more secure in relationships.



Upstairs And Downstairs Brain.

"Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson have a concept in their book "The Whole-Brain Child" that helps us understand the brain in a simple way. It's the upstairs and downstairs brain.

Picture a brain like a house. Downstairs is where important things live. Basic functions like breathing, strong emotions, and innate reactions to danger, like fight, flight or freeze. It's like the downstairs of a house, which is where we almost always find the basics—kitchen, living room, bathroom.

The upstairs brain is more complex. Thinking, imagining, planning – these things come from the upstairs brain.

We use the upstairs brain to think critically, problem solve, and make good decisions. Important to note for those of us working with teens, the upstairs brain is not fully formed until our mid-20s!"

3. Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: Sound Detective

Close your eyes and sit quietly for one minute. Write down or draw 3–5 sounds you hear (e.g., birds chirping, someone talking, the wind blowing).

Discuss : How did you know what those sounds were?

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity develops mindfulness, encouraging the child to focus their attention (upstairs brain) while calming the downstairs brain by tuning into the present moment.

Activity 2: Tone of Voice Game

A parent says simple sentences like “It’s time for dinner” in different tones (e.g., excited, sad, or angry).

The child guesses how the person is feeling based on their voice.

Discuss:: How does listening to the tone of voice help you understand what someone is feeling?

Whole-Brain Tip: This game connects the right brain’s emotional awareness to the left brain’s processing, helping children make sense of emotions and words simultaneously.

Activity 3: Following Instructions Challenge

Parent gives 2–3 simple instructions, like:

"Clap your hands twice."

"Touch your nose and spin around."

"Sit down and say your name."

Child listens and performs the instructions in the correct order.

As a fun twist, gradually add more steps to see how well they can listen!

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity strengthens the working memory in the upstairs brain, teaching children how to hold and process multiple pieces of information at once.

Lesson 2: Listening with Your Eyes

The aim of this session is to teach children the importance of using their eyes to enhance listening and communication by observing facial expressions, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. This session aims to foster emotional awareness, empathy, and focus by helping children integrate the emotional and logical aspects of communication, as emphasized in Dan Siegel's Whole-Brain Child.

1. Introduction

“Did you know that listening isn’t just about using your ears? Your eyes are super important for listening too! When you look at someone while they’re talking, you can understand more than just their words. You can see how they’re feeling, like if they’re happy, sad, or even excited. Today, we’re going to practice how to listen with your eyes!”

Parent Note:

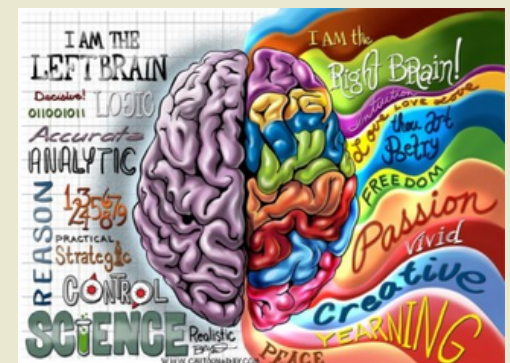
In *The Whole-Brain Child*, Dan Siegel emphasizes the importance of teaching children to notice and interpret non-verbal cues—facial expressions, gestures, and posture. This helps connect the right brain (responsible for emotions and body signals) with the left brain (logical understanding). By teaching children to “listen with their eyes,” you’re helping them integrate these brain functions, fostering better communication and emotional awareness.

What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It’s Important

Listening with your eyes means paying attention to the person talking by looking at them. This helps you notice their facial expressions, hand movements, or body posture, which give you clues about what they’re feeling or trying to say.

How It Works:

- Look at the person’s face and eyes when they’re speaking.
- Pay attention to their expressions—like if they’re smiling, frowning, or looking confused.
- Notice their body movements or gestures, like nodding or pointing, to understand their message better.
- Whole-Brain Connection: The right brain picks up on emotions and non-verbal cues, while the left brain processes the words and logic of the message. By teaching your child to combine these, you’re helping them develop social awareness, empathy, and focus.



Why It's Important:

Listening with your eyes helps you understand more than just the words someone is saying. You can pick up on feelings and unspoken messages, making you a better communicator. This skill also shows the speaker that you care about what they're saying, which strengthens friendships and family relationships.

Whole-Brain Connection: The right brain picks up on emotions and non-verbal cues, while the left brain processes the words and logic of the message. By teaching your child to combine these, you're helping them develop social awareness, empathy, and focus.

3. Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: Emotion Detective

Parents make different facial expressions (happy, sad, angry, surprised).

The child guesses how the parent feels and explains why they think so (e.g., "I think you're happy because you're smiling!").

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity helps children develop emotional literacy, connecting the right brain's emotional intuition with the left brain's ability to articulate feelings.

Activity 2: Mirror Me

The parent or child makes a simple gesture (e.g., waving, shrugging, or tapping their head).

The other person mirrors the movement.

Reflect: How did paying attention to their movements help you know what to do?

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity improves mindful focus and non-verbal communication skills, engaging both brain hemispheres.

Activity 3: Eye Contact Challenge

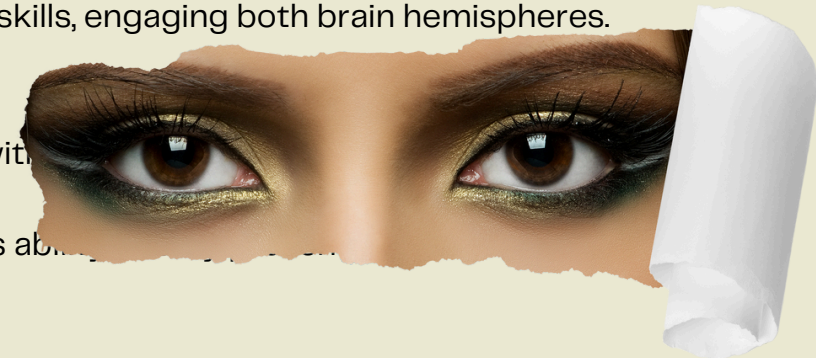
Sit across from each other and see who can maintain gentle eye contact the longest with the other.

Reflect: How did looking at each other's faces make you feel?

Whole-Brain Tip: This game builds connection and trust while strengthening the child's ability to read social cues.

Reflection Prompt (to write or draw):

"How do you feel when someone looks at you while you're talking? How does it feel when they don't?"



Lesson 3: Keeping Your Mouth Quiet

Goal: Teach children how to develop self-control and patience by practicing silence while others are speaking. This helps them focus on the speaker's message and fosters respect in conversations.

1. Introduction to the Topic

For Parents to Explain to Their Child:

“Have you ever been so excited to say something that you spoke while someone else was talking? It's hard to wait your turn sometimes! But when we keep our mouths quiet, we can really hear what the other person is saying, and we show them we respect their words. Today, we're going to learn how to practice this skill!”

Parent Note:

Dan Siegel's *Whole-Brain Child* emphasizes the importance of developing the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for self-regulation, impulse control, and thoughtful decision-making. Helping your child learn to pause before speaking strengthens this area of the brain, enabling them to listen better and engage in conversations more effectively. This also supports brain integration by balancing emotional impulses (right brain) with logical thinking (left brain).

2. What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It's Important

What It Means:

Keeping your mouth quiet means staying silent while someone else is talking. It doesn't mean you can't share your thoughts—it just means waiting until it's your turn. This helps you hear everything the speaker has to say.



How It Works:

- Take a deep breath when someone starts talking.
- Focus on the speaker's words and body language.
- Remind yourself: "I'll have my turn to talk soon."
- When they finish speaking, respond or ask a question about what they said.

Whole-Brain Connection: When children practice keeping their mouths quiet, they engage their prefrontal cortex, strengthening their ability to pause and reflect. This process connects the emotional right brain with the logical left brain, helping them develop self-regulation and empathy.

Why It's Important:

Staying quiet while someone is talking shows respect and builds trust in relationships.

It helps you understand what the other person is saying without missing any important details.

It improves patience and self-control, which are important skills for school, friendships, and family life.

Whole-Brain Insight: Siegel describes how self-control activities activate the brain's "pause-and-plan" response, which is essential for making thoughtful decisions rather than reacting impulsively. Teaching this skill sets the foundation for better emotional regulation and communication.

3. Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: The "Quiet Game"

Sit face-to-face with your child.

Explain that you'll tell them a short story, and their job is to stay as quiet as possible while listening carefully.

After the story, ask them questions like:

"What happened in the story?"

"How do you think the characters felt?"

Reflect: "Was it hard to stay quiet? How did staying quiet help you hear the story better?"

Whole-Brain Tip: This game strengthens the prefrontal cortex by requiring focus and self-regulation.

Activity 2: Turn-Taking Talk

Use a small object (like a ball) as a "talking stick."

Only the person holding the object can talk.

Take turns asking and answering simple questions like:

"What's your favorite color?"

"What's your favorite animal?"

Reflect: "How did it feel to wait your turn to speak?"

Whole-Brain Tip: This reinforces turn-taking, a key skill for empathic listening and respecting others.

Activity 3: "Pause-and-Play" Challenge

Create a simple hand signal (like raising a hand) that your child can use when they feel like interrupting.

Teach them to use the signal instead of speaking.

After the conversation, acknowledge their effort: "I saw you use the signal instead of interrupting—great job practicing self-control!"

Whole-Brain Tip: This helps children build awareness of their impulses and gives them a concrete way to manage them.

Reflection Prompt (to write or draw):

"How do you think people feel when someone interrupts them? How does it feel when someone listens to you without interrupting?"

Lesson 4: Keeping Your Body Still

Teach children the importance of keeping their bodies calm and still to enhance focus and active listening. By practicing this skill, children create a focused environment that helps them listen and engage more effectively in conversations and learning situations.

1. Introduction to the Topic

For Parents to Explain to Their Child:

“Have you ever been so wiggly or bouncy that you missed what someone was saying? Sometimes our bodies are so full of energy that it’s hard to listen well. But when we practice keeping our bodies calm and still, we can really focus and hear everything! Today, we’re going to learn how to use this superpower.”

Parent Note:

Dan Siegel’s Whole-Brain Child highlights the importance of mind-body regulation for developing self-control and focus. The brainstem is responsible for physical movements, while the prefrontal cortex helps regulate those movements. Teaching children how to pause, calm their bodies, and stay still supports brain integration, connecting their reactive impulses with thoughtful responses.

2. What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It’s Important

What It Means:

Keeping your body still means sitting or standing calmly when someone is talking. It doesn’t mean being stiff or uncomfortable—it’s about creating a calm space to focus on the speaker.

How It Works:

- 1. When you feel wiggly or distracted, take a deep breath.**
- 2. Place your hands in your lap or by your side.**
- 3. Keep your feet on the ground or still if sitting.**
- 4. Focus on the person talking by imagining all your energy is helping you listen.**

Whole-Brain Connection:

This practice activates the prefrontal cortex to regulate the brainstem's impulses, helping children find balance between their physical energy and mental focus. It creates a "whole-brain connection" where they learn to calm their bodies to enhance listening and understanding.

Why It's Important:

Calm, still bodies create a peaceful environment for active listening. It reduces distractions for themselves and others, improving their ability to follow instructions.

Staying still fosters patience, mindfulness, and respect in social situations.

Whole-Brain Insight: Siegel's concept of "Name it to Tame it" is helpful here: children can name what they feel (e.g., "I feel wiggly") to start calming their bodies. This acknowledgment connects their emotional brain (right brain) with their logical brain (left brain), making self-regulation easier.



3. Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: The Stillness Challenge

Set a timer for 1 minute. Ask your child to sit or stand still while focusing on their breathing.

Gradually increase the time as they practice.

Afterward, reflect:

“How did it feel to stay still? Was it easy or hard?”

“Did you notice anything different when your body was calm?”

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity strengthens the child’s mind-body connection, teaching them how to shift from an activated state to a calm state.

Activity 2: “Listening Statues” Game

Explain that they’ll pretend to be statues while you read a short story or set of instructions.

The goal is to stay as still as possible while focusing on your words.

After the story, ask questions like:

“What happened in the story?”

“What did the instructions tell you to do?”

Whole-Brain Tip: This game activates the prefrontal cortex as children balance the impulse to move with the task of listening carefully.

Activity 3: "Body Check-In"

Teach your child to do a quick body scan:

"Are my hands still?"

"Are my feet on the floor?"

"Is my breathing calm?"

Turn this into a fun ritual before important conversations or instructions.

Whole-Brain Tip: This simple mindfulness exercise helps children stay grounded and aware, supporting both physical stillness and emotional regulation.

Reflection Prompt (to write or draw):

“When is it hard to keep your body still? When is it easy? How does staying calm help you listen better?”

Lesson 5: Using Your Brain to Think

Teach children how to actively process what they hear, ask thoughtful questions, and understand why thinking is an essential part of being a good listener. This lesson integrates Dan Siegel’s Whole-Brain Child framework to highlight the importance of reflection and reasoning in listening.

1. Introduction to the Topic

For Parents to Explain to Their Child:

“When someone is talking to you, listening isn’t just about hearing their words—it’s about using your brain to think about what they are saying. Your brain is like a detective, helping you figure out what the words mean, what questions you want to ask, and what to do next. Today, we’ll learn how to be great listeners by using our brains to think!”

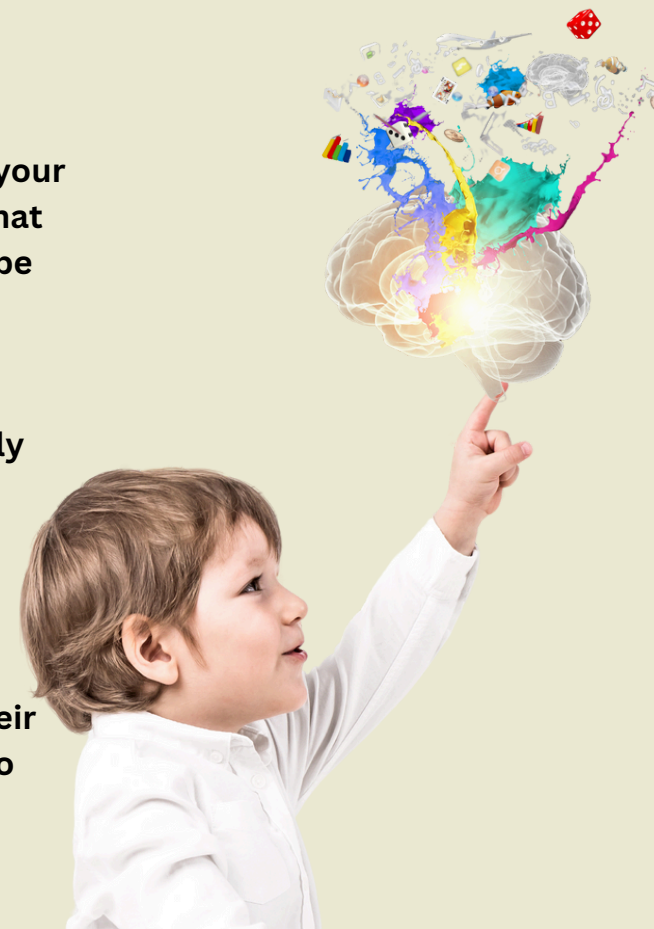
Parent Note:

Dan Siegel’s Whole-Brain Child explains how the prefrontal cortex plays a key role in reflective thinking and decision-making. Encouraging children to use their “upstairs brain” to think critically about what they hear promotes integration between their emotional responses and logical reasoning, making listening a more active and engaged process.

2. What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It’s Important

What It Means:

Using your brain to think while listening means paying attention to the words, understanding their meaning, and asking questions if something is unclear. It also means connecting what you hear to what you already know.



How It Works:

When someone talks, focus on their words and try to picture what they mean.

Think about what they are saying—does it remind you of anything? Does it make sense?

If you're unsure or curious, ask a question to learn more.

Take a moment to decide what to do with the information—do you need to respond, follow an instruction, or just remember it?/

Whole-Brain Connection:

Siegel's concept of “engaging the upstairs brain” helps children use their prefrontal cortex to analyze, reflect, and respond thoughtfully.

This integration of reasoning and understanding fosters critical thinking and builds their capacity to handle complex information.

Why It's Important:

Thinking while listening helps children truly understand what they hear, rather than just passively receiving information.

It teaches them to ask questions and clarify when needed, building confidence and curiosity.

Processing information helps them follow instructions accurately and solve problems effectively.

It fosters empathy, as thinking about what someone says helps them understand others' perspectives and feelings.

3.Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: "Think, Ask, Understand"

Step 1: Listen to a short story or set of instructions.

Step 2: After listening, answer these questions:

“What did you hear?”“What does it mean?”“What questions do you have about it?”

Step 3: Discuss or write down their thoughts and any questions they came up with.

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity strengthens the connection between the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus by encouraging children to reflect on and organize what they hear.

Activity 2: "Picture What You Hear"

Ask your child to close their eyes while you say a sentence or tell a short story.

Challenge them to picture the scene in their mind and then describe it to you.

Example sentences:

“The dog ran through the green park to catch the red ball.”

“Put your jacket on the chair and then wash your hands.”

Whole-Brain Tip: This exercise encourages mindful listening by engaging both the visual and reflective parts of the brain, helping kids create mental connections.

Activity 3: "Follow the Steps"

Give your child multi-step instructions (e.g., “Pick up your book, put it on the table, and then sit down”).

Encourage them to think through the steps before acting.

Discuss afterward:

“What did you hear?”

“What helped you remember what to do?”

Whole-Brain Tip: This strengthens the brain’s ability to sequence and process information, enhancing problem-solving skills.

Reflection Prompt (to write or draw):Why do you think it’s important to use your brain when you listen? How does thinking help you understand better?”

Lesson 6: Using Your Heart

Teach children how to listen with empathy, helping them connect with the emotions behind the words and fostering deeper relationships with others. This lesson uses Dan Siegel’s Whole-Brain

1. Introduction to the Topic

For Parents to Explain to Their Child:

“Listening isn’t just about hearing words or understanding instructions—it’s also about understanding how someone feels when they talk. We can use our hearts to listen by paying attention to the emotions behind the words. When we do this, we show people that we care and that we want to understand them. Today, we’ll learn how to listen with our hearts so we can connect with others in a really special way.”

Parent Note:

Dan Siegel’s Whole-Brain Child highlights the importance of integrating the limbic system (emotions) with the prefrontal cortex (reasoning and reflection). This integration helps children develop empathy, which is the ability to tune into others’ feelings and respond in a caring way. Listening with the heart strengthens emotional intelligence, helping children build meaningful relationships and navigate social situations effectively.

2. What the Skill Means, How It Works, and Why It’s Important

What It Means:

Listening with your heart means noticing the feelings behind someone’s words. It’s about understanding how the speaker feels and showing that you care.

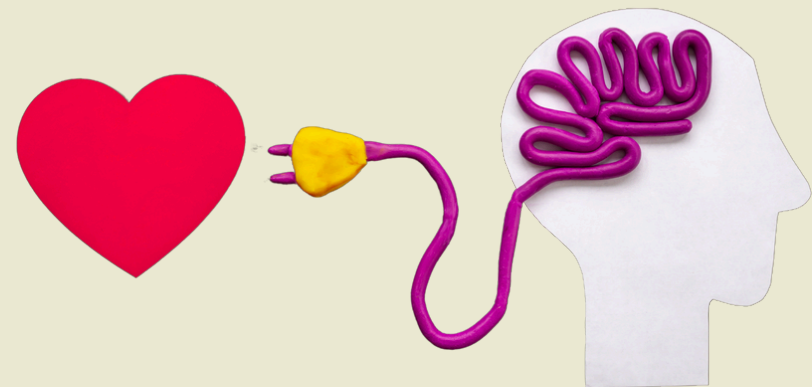
How It Works:

- Pay attention to tone of voice. Is the person speaking happily, sadly, or angrily?
- Notice facial expressions and body language. Are they smiling, frowning, or looking upset?
- Imagine how the person might be feeling. Ask yourself, “What would I feel if I were them?”
- Respond in a caring way, like giving a kind word or a hug, or just listening quietly to show you care.
- Whole-Brain Connection:

This skill involves the right brain, which processes emotions and non-verbal cues, and the prefrontal cortex, which allows for thoughtful responses. Empathy is strengthened when children learn to integrate these areas, helping them respond to others in emotionally intelligent ways.

Why It's Important:

Empathy helps children build strong friendships and relationships. It teaches them to care for others, creating a sense of connection and belonging. Understanding emotions makes children better communicators and listeners. It helps reduce conflict, as children learn to see things from someone else's perspective.



3. Engaging Exercises and Activities

Activity 1: "Guess the Feeling"

Draw or show pictures of different facial expressions (happy, sad, angry, scared, etc.).

Ask your child to guess the feeling shown in each picture.

Discuss what clues they used to figure it out (e.g., "The big smile tells me they're happy!").

Whole-Brain Tip: This activity helps children use their right brain to recognize emotions and strengthens their ability to interpret non-verbal cues.

Activity 2: "What Would You Feel?"

Read short scenarios to your child (e.g., "Your friend lost their favorite toy," or "Your sibling got a surprise gift").

Ask your child:

"How do you think they feel?"

"What could you do to show you care?"

Whole-Brain Tip: This exercise encourages children to use both emotional understanding and reasoning to respond with empathy.

Activity 3: "Heart Listening Role Play"

Role-play a conversation with your child where you act out different emotions. For example, you could pretend to be sad about losing something or excited about a fun event.

Encourage your child to respond empathetically by saying things like, "I'm sorry you feel sad," or "That sounds so exciting!"

Reflect on the role play: "How did it feel to understand someone's emotions? How did it feel to share your own emotions and be understood?"

Whole-Brain Tip: Role-playing strengthens connections in the limbic system and builds confidence in using empathy during real-life interactions.

Reflection Prompt (to write or draw):

"How do you feel when someone understands your feelings? How can you use your heart to understand someone else's feelings?"

Thank you for **being**
here!