

When your child tries to tell you what he needs, listen carefully and provide words to expand what he says.

Your added language and show of sympathy help him feel loved and may help him to express himself the next time.



Why this is important

Listening carefully to what your child says and responding to what he needs let him know he deserves attention. When his needs are met with care, he will become more conscious of the needs of others. Through repetition, he may also learn how to be a good listener.

What you do

- Listen to your child as he begins to express his needs. If necessary, add some words to build on what he says.
- Pay attention to feelings that suggest he has a need that he cannot properly express in words.
- Take his hand and let him guide you when he cannot convey his need with language. Help him use words to express himself: *You did need help with the buggy. I'm glad you came to tell me.*
- Show patience and support as you work to understand his needs.
- Respond to your child's needs with appropriate attention. At times you will act quickly and decisively. At other times you can offer a leisurely, less intense response. Your reaction will help him gauge the importance of his needs.
- Help him think ahead and plan his needs: *What will you need to take with you when we go for a walk around the neighborhood?*

Another idea

When your child does use language to express his needs, you may need to interpret his few words. For example, *book* may mean he wants you to read to him. It could also mean his book is out of reach or he might be looking for a specific book. You can reduce his frustration by actively trying to help meet his need.