

OF NEEDS

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OBSERVE What is happening? What are you seeing? What are you hearing? Observe what is occurring without judgment and evaluation. It is important to include these additional questions: What may have led up to this moment? What is going on in the child's life that may be affecting this moment?

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FEELINGS What might the child be feeling? There may be many, many feelings arising in any situation.

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NEEDS What might the child be needing? Remember that all feelings spring from needs. Keep in mind the basic needs of attention, affection, and autonomy to help you identify what needs are arising.

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ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILD Pay attention to your body language and your tone of voice. Are you receiving what your child is trying to communicate with you with your full attention, eye contact, body language, and voice? Are you entering into the situation with curiosity, openness, and connection?

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In order to be able to engage with your child it may be important to give yourself empathy for your own feelings and needs in the moment. If the situation has caused a stress response that prevents you from being able to engage with your child (fight, flight, or freeze), you will need to take a moment to use the tools that help you regulate your stress and big feelings. This process is called moving from the "low road" to the "high road" and it helps you connect with the decision making part of your brain where you can reflect and problem solve.

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EMPATHY Put yourself in your child's shoes, reflecting on what is happening to your child. Make a statement that validates what the child is feeling and needing. For example: "I see that you are feeling . . . "; "I wonder if you are needing . . . "; "I wonder if you are feeling . . . because you are needing . . . "; "I imagine you might be feeling . . . because you are wanting . . . Is that right?"

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DEVELOP SOLUTIONS The solutions will respect and honor the child's feelings and needs. If appropriate, begin by asking the child for his/her suggestion of a solution. There may be many solutions. This is an opportunity for creativity. Often a solution can be very playful. Sometimes the solution is simply to have the conversation about feelings and needs that you just had.