

Practical Guide to identifying your child's feelings & needs

I really believe that a huge part of my contribution to the community is to enable parents to progress in their journey of peaceful parenting. My intentions are to do so by helping parents to better understand their selves and their children and hopefully in doing that bring more empathy and peacefulness to homes.

As a first step I thought of writing a series of Practical mini Guides, on understanding your child's (1) Feelings, (2) Needs at a given moment. Then will work on a guiding you towards (3) Making empathy guesses to your child and finally (4) requesting something from your child.

For this first guide, I will work on some cases related to identifying feelings and needs. My hope that in doing so, I will enable you to understand/guess your child's feelings in similar situations and hopefully approach the situation differently.

Let me start by first defining what Feelings & Needs are in this peaceful paradigm;

Feelings are body sensations or emotions that are experienced by a person/child at a given moment.

Feelings are not meant to be interpretations of a behavior done by another person. For example; if I say, "I feel that you are trying to annoy me" then that is an interpretation of this behavior and NOT my feelings. However, if I say " I feel irritated/frustrated/hurt/troubled" that becomes a description of my feelings.

What about needs, how are needs viewed in peaceful parenting;

Needs are our deepest desires, they are those innate longings we have for or from life.

Needs in NVC and peaceful parenting are not strategies of how we want our request to be executed. For example; "I need you to go take a shower/eat your dinner/go to bed" is not a need, but rather a strategy that you as a parent are using to satisfy you need for "contributing to sustenance/health of your child" or it might be another need such as "your need for "rest, space, ease, simplicity" and definitely could be both.

Now that we have established what are needs and feelings, I will illustrate in the below table some situations that an everyday mum may face and connect them to feelings and needs;

Situation	Feelings	Needs
Running around in super market and not listening to me asking for her to walk by the stroller	Bored, impatient, excited, distracted, restless, lonely	Engagement, play, participation, empowerment, acceptance, cooperation, inclusion
Playing with food/dropping food or juice on purpose on the table – then touching/playing with it	Intrigued, absorbed, inquisitive, curious, playful	Learning, knowing, experimenting, clarity, empowerment
Not wanting to wear their clothes or their jacket or whichever clothes you picked	Warm, cold, hesitant, frustrated, sensitive, insecure	Choice, independence, trust in own ability, involvement
Crying loudly for leaving the park or a friends house or some place of joy	Sad, helpless, afraid, shocked, desperate	Play, choice, trust (that we will come back again), empathy, understanding, compassion, predictability
Not wanting to share a toy	Threatened, protective, apprehensive, insecure, afraid	Predictability, ownership, respect (of own things), being heard, protection
Hitting a friend or mum or someone else because they took the toy	Angry, frustrated, helpless, horrified, shocked, violent	Understanding, empathy (for the pain he/she are going through), assurance, dignity, power (over own toys), acknowledgement
Following mum/dad everywhere they go	Insecure, afraid, uncomfortable, lonely	Attachment, compassion, acceptance, recognition, engagement, affection, physical touch
Procrastinating in getting ready to go out “in the morning” or to anyplace	Tired, hungry, uneasy, sad, stressed, puzzled, overwhelmed	Space, rest, ease, pacing, understanding, clarity, support, cooperation
Crying /screaming for losing a game a race for example	Distressed, embarrassed, anxious, jealous, frustrated	Trust, acceptance, assurance, inclusion, recognition, to be seen and heard
Crying when mum/dad leaves the child care	Distressed, fearful, horrified, insecure	Stability, familiarity, safety, empathy, physical touch, sensitivity
Playing in the park/ with friends/ running around	Happy, joyful, playful, empowered	Freedom, joy, space, community, compassion
Hugging mum/dad and just staying there	Loving, calm, content composed	Physical touch, safety, stability, closeness, nourishment