

Child 1 (age 7):



You arrive home from school feeling sad and frustrated because you felt like the football teams were uneven in PE, and your team lost. Because you are upset and cross, you don't want to go back to school tomorrow.

Child 2 (age 3):



(While your parent is rocking a baby)

You ask your parent to play with you - when they reply, you scream and shout 'I hate that baby, I want that baby to go away!' and you start throwing your pens on the floor.

Child 3 (age 5):



You have had a bad day because your best friend, Fatima, made fun of your new lunchbox. You tell your parent that you hate Fatima, and she isn't your best friend anymore. (You are hoping that your parent will listen to you and reassure you that you can work through this and still be friends.)

Child 4 (age 9):



You are frustrated because you had to miss break time at school today because you were talking in assembly. (You find assembly really boring).

You tell your parent that you are annoyed that you had to miss break time. When they ask you why, you tell them and say that you hate school now.

Parent 1A

(bad listening – ignoring the child’s feelings):



When your child starts to speak to you, start looking at your phone. At the same time, tell them that you used to hate PE when you were at school, and they just have to get used to it. When they say they don't want to go to school tomorrow, tell them you will get them there, even if you have to drag them!

Parent 1B

(good listening – full attention, being available for them):



Look at your phone, but when your child starts to speak to you, put your phone away and turn to face them. Let them explain their feelings, and then empathise with them, for example say ‘that sounds really difficult’, or ‘that must have been so frustrating’.

When your child says that they don’t want to go to school tomorrow, allow them time to explain why, and ask them if there is anything you can do to help them feel better – for example, maybe a trip to the park together after school to play football?

Parent 2A

(bad listening – letting our own tiredness and stress impact our child):



(Pretend to be rocking a baby)

When your 3 year old child asks you to play with them, keep looking at the baby and tell them that you can't because you are trying to get the baby to sleep.

When your child starts shouting, shout back at them 'you mustn't say those things about your baby sister, that's mean. Now the baby will never get to sleep because of you!' and walk away.

Parent 2B

(good listening – acknowledging child's feelings and being available for them):



(Pretend to be rocking a baby)

When your 3 year old child asks you to play with them, look at them and tell them that you will once the baby is asleep. When your child starts to shout, let them express their feelings and then say 'it sounds like you are upset with your baby sister because she is taking up a lot of my time. I'm sorry about that. Can you choose a puzzle for us to do together once she is asleep?'

Parent 3A

(bad listening – trying to enforce a solution):



When your 5 year old child tells you that they hate their best friend, ask them why. When your child explains why, tell them ‘right, that’s it, I’m going to talk to her mum and let her know that her daughter’s a bully!’. When your child asks you not to, ignore them and tell them that you’ve had enough of that family and you are going to sort this out.

Parent 3B

(good listening – asking open questions):



When your 5 year old child tells you they hate their best friend, ask them why. When they tell you, give them your full attention (eye contact, nods), and then say ‘that sounds really difficult, and very upsetting. It’s really hard when we fall out with our friends.’

Then ask your child how they are feeling about their new lunchbox now, and if there is anything you can do to help. Also ask them if they would like to plan something with Fatima soon after school. Accept their answers, without putting your own opinions into the discussion!

Parent 4A

(bad listening – judging and criticising):



When your 9 year old child tells you that had to miss break time at school today, say ‘oh no, not again! You are always getting in trouble! What was it this time?’

When they tell you, raise your voice and say ‘how many times have I told you, you’ve got to shut up and listen in school, and stop mucking around. You will never get your GCSEs if you don’t start paying attention’.

Parent 4B

(good listening – empathy, not judging):



When your 9 year old child tells you they had to miss break time at school today, say ‘oh dear, that must have been frustrating. What happened?’ When your child tells you, ask them what it was they were talking about. Listen quietly, and then ask how they feel when they are in assembly. Ask them why they think everyone needs to be quiet during assembly.

Then ask them if there is anything during the school day that they do enjoy, or any school trips coming up that they are looking forward to. Reassure them that although school can feel difficult, you are here to help them do their best.