

# SAY SORRY LIKE YOU MEAN IT

## Cultivating caring and empathy in kids

You can force a child to say 'sorry,' but you can't make them feel remorse. Remorse comes from caring about the impact of your actions on others and caring feelings are what help a child do the right thing when no one is looking.



Making a child say caring words doesn't make them more caring, it makes a mockery out of true caring and detaches these words from their root meaning.

**CHILDREN WILL BE CARING TO OTHERS WHEN THEY ARE FULL OF CARING FEELINGS.**

### WHAT IS CARING?

Without caring we can't become emotionally mature and socially responsible

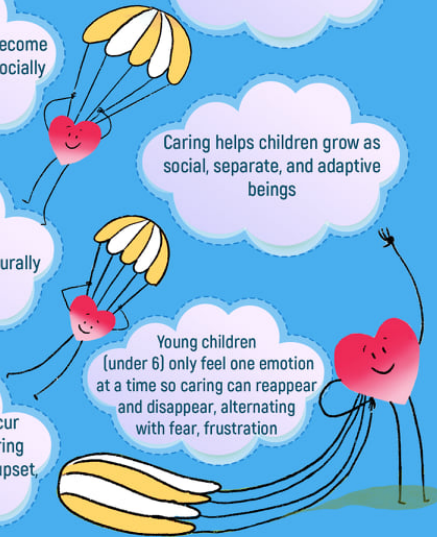
Caring is an emotion that is hardwired into the brain to make togetherness possible

Caring helps children grow as social, separate, and adaptive beings

Play is an incubator where caring feelings naturally emerge

Young children (under 6) only feel one emotion at a time so caring can reappear and disappear, alternating with fear, frustration

Impulse control can occur between 5 to 7 when caring feelings will help temper upset fear, and frustration



### IT IS OUR JOB ...



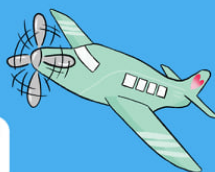
To keep our children's hearts soft



To help them get to their vulnerable feelings



To let their caring guide their apologies

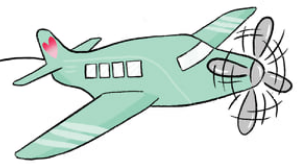


### WHAT ERODES CARING?



- Forcing children to act caring
- Rewarding caring
- Praising caring
- Punishing children for not caring
- A lack of time and space to play

"It is the freedom NOT to say sorry that provides the freedom TO say sorry." - Gordon Neufeld, PhD



### HOW TO SAY SORRY

Come alongside each child and acknowledge their emotions either together or separately.

ASK --

**DO YOU HAVE ANY SORRIES IN YOU?**

ENCOURAGE -

**NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO GIVE ONE TO THAT PERSON**

### IF NO, THEN WE MIGHT LEAD WITH ...



Set time aside to collect the child and to keep them close

**There are many ways to say "I'm sorry" but only one will do, the one you give from the heart when you feel it's true.**

Give them time and space to play so their feelings can be expressed safely

When their caring is back tell them is a good time to give their sorry

Ask them again if a sorry has come back

Read their emotion and come back around when the child is softer, and emotions are less intense

### WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD'S SORRY'S DON'T COME BACK?



Compensate for their lack of caring by keeping others out of harm's way



Work to bring the child's emotions back through relational support that softens their heart



Consider if the child is attached to the adults taking care of them?



Are there signs of stuckness including a lack of tears, fear, and increased aggression?

### FORCING CARING BEHAVIOUR IS NOT THE SAME AS NUTURING A CHILD'S CARING SPIRIT

#### How to read The SORRY PLANE with kids

- Preface the book by talking about when we may need to apologize to others
- Talk about the difference between saying sorry and feeling sorry
- Ask them how it feels when someone says sorry like they mean it and when they don't



The Sorry Plane by Deborah MacNamara and illustrated by Zoe Si



DEBORAH MACNAMARA  
author of Rest, Play, Grow  
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