



TIPS FOR EDUCATORS FOR THOSE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS

Sharing your concerns with parents about their child's behaviour or development can be stressful.

When you voice your concerns to the parent, you are giving the child a voice and helping the child to access the support they need.

This part of your caring role can be complex, and you can't completely control the outcome. But there are many things you can do to increase the chances the child you care for, will receive the care they need. Remember that this doesn't to be 'the conversation' as this is often not a one-off meeting that you have with the parent. It is more likely to be accepted by the parent, if this is a conversation that happens over time. This will allow you to build the relationship and trust, as well as allow them time to understand what is happening and act on it.

Let's start with some

DONTS

- Don't make statements that go beyond your scope of knowledge and expertise, for example, he probably has autism.
- Don't give too much of your opinion before you get a sense from the parent if they have any concerns about their child.
- Don't use presumptive language around the child's intentions, such as manipulative, lazy, nasty, naughty.
- Don't leap into conversations with what you want to talk about. Avoid conversations that may make parents feel ambushed. Give them an introduction and a frame for the conversation. Have one short conversation and then a longer one later. 'Do you think we could put our heads together about some things I have seen with Johnny?'

DO

- Keep in mind that a great outcome happens when you and the parent align against the problem, rather than you align against the child or the parent, 'can we put our heads together to help Tim?'
- Hold in your mind the very real fact that parents are the experts on their child. Parents love their child and may be preoccupied that gets in the way of that.
- Express something about the child that shows that you know them as a person, before talking about the vulnerabilities or challenges.
- Have an idea about what needs to be done when you have communicated this with them. Help them know what to do next, for example, 'it would be useful to see a paediatrician, here is a list of the ones in the area'.
- Consider the parents emotional state when you start this conversation, it may not be the right time.
- Do give them specific examples of what you are seeing that concern you, for example, he is hitting the other children and hurting them, this occurs every 20 minutes or so.
- Do ensure that you talk about what it was that was atypical rather than what it means in terms of diagnosis or problem.
- Frame it as a problem from the child's perspective, for example, 'he seems to struggle with playing, he will hit the other children when frustrated, this is getting in the way of making friends'. Paint the picture for them so they understand what it means for their child.
- Express your own curiosity about their child for example, 'Tim slams the fire engine on Suzy's head, I was wondering what was going on there, this is fifth time it has happened. He seemed to get frustrated and angry very quickly, I am wondering what this is about.'
- Do listen to the parents, give them time. Be curious if the parents have any concerns.
- Do remember, that for some parents, hearing that their child has 'problems' can be extremely upsetting. Allow them time to absorb what you are saying, with compassion.