

## **Attunement**

Do you ever feel like you can read your child's mind? You know what they are going to do or say next because they have had the same reaction before? This is attunement. Improving your attunement skills will allow you to create a more patient and understanding relationship with your child.

### **1. Modify Your Child's Behavior:**

Be attuned to your child's anxieties and try a creative approach that allows them to focus on positive behaviors and interactions instead of their anxieties or stresses.

If you are attuned to the fact that your child has anxiety about going to school in the morning, for instance, help them relieve their stress by adding some interactive play time with them before school. This will boost their endorphins, so they feel good and less stressed. Allowing them to run off some of their energy in the morning creates a positive and consistent change in their behavior.

### **2. Wait for the Right time**

Applying patience is an attunement-builder because when you understand your child's mood you can eliminate some of the common struggles you have with them.

If your child wakes up happy most mornings, but grumpy after naps on the weekend (like my son!), you are already attuned to expect that behavior. It might be better to wait, or to be patient, until they feel a little less grumpy to talk to them or ask them to do something. You will get better results that way, and they will be less grumpy when they respond.

### **3. Understand Your Child's Stage of Development**

Being attuned to your child's stages of development will break some of the assumptions that you have about them, which will improve your relationship and understanding with your child.

When you ask a 3 to 4-year old to sit on the floor, they seem to roll around a lot. Are they not paying attention? Chances are that part of their behavior is due to their physical stage of development. Physically, it is uncomfortable in their core muscles to sit on the floor for long without rolling back.

Similarly, 10 to 14-year olds seem lazy. They look like they do not have enough energy to take the trash out after watching a movie. What's really going on here? Research shows that they are literally physically, scientifically exhausted. Their body and brain are changing from kid versions to adult versions, which makes them seem less than smart and overly lazy.

By being attuned to their stages of development, you can communicate better with them knowing what to expect and why.

### **4. Anticipate Language Barriers**

Being attuned to your child's development in language skills will help you understand their responses and reactions, and not get frustrated if they only respond to bits and piece of what you

ask. If you learned a foreign language for only a few years and heard a conversation among fluent speakers, would you understand it completely or only be able to pick out a word, phrase or topic here and there?

If several children hear, “Molly, can you come here” it is possible that several of them will come running instead of just Molly. This is because they only heard the instructional phrase and not necessarily the name. Kids apply the only language skills that they have at their age of development, which for a 3 or 4-year-old is only 3 or 4 years!

### **5. Practice Response Flexibility**

Probably the best thing you can do to improve your reactions as a parent is to practice response flexibility. This means being flexible with your child’s mood and deciding what must be finished immediately, and what can wait. Or, realizing that it is not necessary to be harsh every time something bad happens.

Recently my son decided it was a good idea to do a flip on top of me when I was on the couch and busted my nose. Instead of yelling at him, I used response flexibility and kept my reaction in perspective because I know that he didn’t do it on purpose. He was playing, and I had to keep that in perspective. Explaining what happened to them and using it as a teaching moment is a more responsible way to respond using response flexibility.

Attunement all comes down to how well you know your child and their moods, and how well you know yourself. Start thinking about how you can help your child use the right behaviors by being more attuned to their development, behaviors, language skills and mood, and most importantly, try to practice response flexibility when the unexpected happens. Sometimes your child will learn more from how you respond than from what you say.