

## Helping Children Develop the Habit of “Noticing” and “Nurturing” Their Important Feelings

*(A companion's role is to be a caring presence that helps a child attend to how their body feels inside, so their inner story can break through and be heard. Your role is not to judge, give advice, analyze, or comment upon what they find.)*

*“Bold text in quotes...” is what you say to the child whom you are companioning. (Italic texts in brackets...) are instructions for you.*

### **NOTICING**

#### **1. Responding to a Child's Important Feeling**

“Those tears, (or that excitement, challenge, etc.) feels like there's a story inside your body, asking you to listen to it.”

“Would you like me to sit with you while you close your eyes and hold the feeling inside you right now, just like you hold your... (teddy bear, doll, puppy, etc.)?”... (pause)... (Older Children:) “...like you used to hold...etc...”

### **NURTURING**

#### **2. Helping a Child to Nurture an Important Feeling**

“Notice where you carry this feeling in your body and how it feels inside you.” (This helps a child to hold their attention inside.)

“You might want to put your hand on the place where your body feels this the most, just letting it know that you care, and that you're going to be with it for awhile.” (pause)

“I'll wait here with you while you quietly sit with how your body feels inside. Take your time and let me know if it wants to say anything to you—with a word, a picture, a memory or some other feeling that seems to fit the way it feels.” (pause)

#### **Going Further with “Noticing” and “Nurturing”**

##### **3. Reflection**

*(Say back whatever the child shares. Use his or her words—not yours! If they say a lot, reflect back just the most feeling part.)*

##### **4. Recycling**

*(Whenever something fresh or new, unexpected or surprising comes inside, and your child shares this, say it back so they know you heard it. Then, help them to notice and stay with the body-feel of that. e.g.:)*

“... (‘scary’) seems to say how it feels. So, now notice how saying (‘scary’) feels in your body, and try to be with that like you would hold your... (teddy bear, doll, etc.)”

“Let me know if anything further

comes that fits the way this feels inside you right now.” (pause) *(Keep inviting them to go forward by repeating #s 3 & 4 as needed, until they seem ready to stop.)*

### **Ending a Session**

#### **(a) Checking to See whether it's OK to Stop**

1) “Does this feel like it wants to unfold a little further at this time, or would this be a good place to rest and stop—at least for now?” *(If they want to stop, then say:)*

2) “Take a few moments before stopping to remember how it felt a little while ago when you began being with your feelings. (pause) ...Now notice how it feels inside. (pause)...Does it feel the same, or is there any difference?” *(If it feels the same, go to (B) below. Otherwise, close with (3) below.)*

3) “Stay with your body's feel of this difference in a way that says, ‘Thank you.’ Then, when you're ready, you can stop.”

#### **(b) Stopping in an Unfinished Place**

1) “We need to stop in a few moments. So, ask this feeling place that still has

more to say: ‘How do you need me to take care of you so you can be my friend and teacher?’” *(Wait, and give the child time to listen for direction.)*

2) “Also, promise this place that you'll come back to see how it feels when you have more time to be with it again, so it can continue to tell you more of it's story.” (pause)

3) “Then, when you're ready, you can stop.”

### **After a Session**

1) “Is there anything you want to say about what we just did together, or would you rather just be quiet?”

2) *(If your child wants to talk, don't just respond to “what” they say. Respond, instead, to how they feel inside “as they say it.” Perhaps another important feeling will surface as you respond in this way, and they may need you to companion them further.)*

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*(Remember, this unfolding journey of awareness at the body-level of knowing does not often happen according to our schedule or convenience. You need to be flexible enough when your child shares important feelings so you can take advantage of this learning opportunity.)*

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email: <LFLOM@mho.net> or visit our website at: [www.biospiritual.org](http://www.biospiritual.org).**

The Institute and its members do not teach the habit of noticing and nurturing important feelings as a substitute for professional psychotherapeutic or psychiatric care for those who need it, nor as a substitute for training and licensing in the above health fields.

*(Card written by Edwin M. McMahon, Ph.D.) (version 8/02)*