

'Defusing the situation is essential. Don't be defensive or take anything to heart.'

When you are out of your depth

It is OK to feel out of your depth at some time in your conversations with parents.

It is OK to listen to families as we have suggested but sometimes there is a time when you know the family needs support and assistance that we cannot give.

When a parent tells you something that needs (another) expert support, these comments may be useful:

- **'You know I am always here to listen to you but at this point I think you need to speak to someone who can actually help you with this issue. Would you like me to contact..... for you?'**
- **'This problem you have been sharing with me over the last few weeks seems to be getting worse for you. What about talking to someone who can take some action for you? I know.... what if I give you their contact details?'**

These suggestions allow the family to seek expert advice and you can still keep the relationship going with them. You can still greet them and ask how everything is going.

Sometimes, when you are working with the children, a parent may say something to you that you know another staff member, (such as the room leader or Coordinator), is better able to support the family.

It is better for the family if you suggest this to them:

- **'Thank you for sharing this with me, but I think (Coordinator) knows more about this, so I'll see if (Coordinator) can see you now.'**
- **'I'm so glad you have brought this up. I know (Coordinator) will be happy to hear the whole story from you now.'**
- **'I can see it is important that you speak to someone now so I will see if (Coordinator) is available.'**

It may be that the parent says they only want to talk to you, and then these sentences may be of assistance:

- **'Thank you. I will continue to support you through this but now I have to attend to the children. So if you would like to talk, I'm sure (Coordinator) will be available.'**
- **'I can understand that you only want to talk to me, but I assure you that (Coordinator) is a wonderful listener and you will be safe with him/her.'**

A family member may approach you in an unacceptable manner. Defusing the situation is essential. Don't be defensive or take anything to heart. Agree with everything and say you want to understand and try to steer the family member towards either another staff member or away from children (whatever is necessary) then refer to 'Communication - always listening' prompts, or refer to Coordinator Section above.

If a parent comes into the room calling out noisily and disrupting the children and their activities, sometimes this is just the way they behave everywhere. The best you can do is to role model the behaviour you want, such as using a very quiet voice. Some people/ families will not realise that their behaviour is disruptive.

If the loud voice persists, draw his/her attention to how the children have turned around.

They may be so wound-up that they haven't noticed.

Ask them to move aside with you so as not to disrupt the children.

