

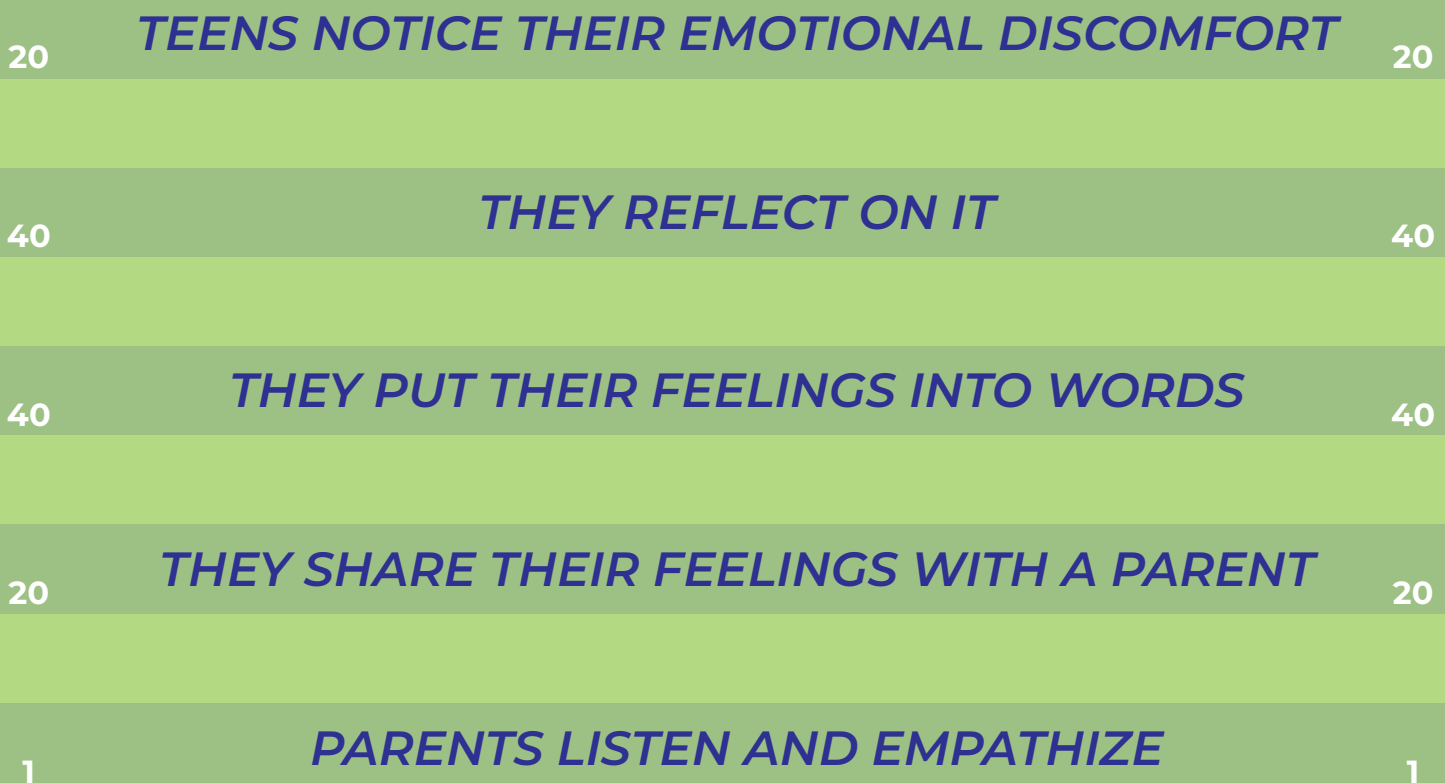


THE PARENTING GAME-CHANGER

We love our teens and want to ease their distress. In *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers*, Lisa Damour equates a teen's struggle with emotions to a football game, "By the time our teen is talking to us, they have carried their emotional football to the one-yard line."

This analogy reminds us how far they have come and how close they are to finding their own solution. *Parents listening with empathy (without advising or fixing) provides the final push over the goal line to relief.*


FROM DISTRESS...




...TO RELIEF!


KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN


 **Listen with Full Attention:** Summarize what you heard as a headline.


 **Show Empathy:** Use phrases like “I’m so sorry to hear that.” or “It makes total sense you feel that way.”

 **Expand Emotional Vocabulary:** When your teen says something vague like “Everything stinks!” you can ask “What’s up?” or say “Tell me more.”

ENCOURAGE YOUR TEEN TO TALK

 **Avoid Face-to-Face Pressure:** Chat on walks or in the car, offering an easy out by starting the conversation when you are just a few minutes from home. Be open to texting. Teens tell us it can be easier to tell their parents how they feel in a text.

 **Avoid the Spotlight:** Steer clear of direct questions. Ask about peers to open conversations about their own feelings. Rather than “How do you feel about your new coach?” Ask, “What are people saying about the new coach?”

 **Be Patient:** Allow teens time to think before they talk. Intentionally put some space between your question and their answer. Make statements like, “If you want to chat at any point this weekend, you know I am always game.” Let them choose WHEN and WHAT to talk about. Be ready to listen when they are ready to talk.

Adapted from the book *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers: Raising Connected, Capable, and Compassionate Adolescents* by Lisa Damour.