

BUILD-UP GUIDE:

Words to Fill a Melancholic's Needs

Melancholic children are wired to need space and silence, safety, sensitivity, and support.

If you have a Melancholic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team, consider this your action cheat sheet—a list of things you can do to fill those needs and show them how much you value their innate wiring.

BUILD UP A MELANCHOLIC CHILD BY...

Noticing when they need support.

- › Toddler: “That’s tricky to do all by yourself. What if we work together?”
- › Tween: “I’ll show an example to make sure everyone understands.”
- › Teen: “You must be slammed. How can I help?”

Keeping their secrets.

- › Toddler: “I’m here to listen no matter what you want to say.”
- › Tween: “Thanks for trusting me enough to share that.”
- › Teen: “You can trust I’ll keep this between us.”

Encouraging their creativity.

- › Toddler: “What a great picture! Will you tell me about it?”
- › Tween: “If you want to take lessons, I’d be happy to look into options.”
- › Teen: “I love watching you perform.”

Being sensitive to their emotions.

- › Toddler: “I can totally see why that made you sad.”
- › Tween: “That sounds like a tough day.”
- › Teen: “I’m so sorry that happened. It must have been stressful.”

Helping them feel safe.

- › Toddler: “I promise to stand right here so you’ll know where I am.”
- › Tween: “You can tell me anything. I’m always here for you.”
- › Teen: “Call if you want a ride home and I’ll come right away.”

Believing in them.

- › Toddler: “I knew you could do it. I’m so proud of you!”
- › Tween: “You are totally prepared. I believe in you.”
- › Teen: “They are going to be so impressed by your research and detailed work.”

Helping them formulate a Plan B.

- › Toddler: “If you start to feel overwhelmed, who could you ask for help?”
- › Tween: “Okay, if that happens again, what can you do instead?”
- › Teen: “If you don’t get this position, what is your Plan B?”

Respecting their privacy.

- › Toddler: “I’ll make sure your sister stays out of your room.”
- › Tween: “You can tell me as much or as little as you’d like.”
- › Teen: “I didn’t want to do anything without asking you first.”

Making eye contact when they’re talking.

- › Toddler: “Let’s move to a quiet spot where we can sit together.”
- › Tween: “I want to give you my full attention so I don’t miss any details.”
- › Teen: “Do you want to come get coffee with me and we can chat?”

Giving them time to process.

- › Toddler: “You can tell me your answer at the end of the day.”
- › Tween: “If you decide you want to talk about it, I’m here to listen.”
- › Teen: “Let’s revisit it next week and see how you think and feel then.”

Caution!

Saying or doing things that deprive a child of their innate needs—intentionally or accidentally—won't bring out their best. So, consider this your cheat sheet of words and actions to avoid if you have a Melancholic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team.

YOU MAY TEAR DOWN A MELANCHOLIC CHILD BY...

Dismissing their emotions.

- › Toddler: "There's no reason to cry about this."
- › Tween: "Don't let it bother you. I'm sure she didn't mean it that way."
- › Teen: "You're still not over that?"

Making them feel guilty.

- › Toddler: "Your cranky mood kind of ruined the day."
- › Tween: "You never want to come with me."
- › Teen: "We paid a lot of money and now you don't want to go?"

Not knowing or giving them all the details.

- › Toddler: "Don't worry about the day's plan. I'll let you know what's next."
- › Tween: "I'm not sure what time it starts. I guess we'll find out if we're late."
- › Teen: "I haven't decided yet whether this will count toward your final grade."

Changing the schedule—especially without notice.

- › Toddler: "I've decided to make one more stop."
- › Tween: "I told them you could play after school today."
- › Teen: "You can do your homework later. I've decided we're all going to the store now."

Allowing them to isolate or withdraw.

- › Toddler: "Go be sad somewhere else. The rest of us are having a good time."

- › Tween: "Tell me what's wrong or don't, but I'm not playing 20 questions."
- › Teen: "Fine. Stay in your room as long as you want. I give up."

Ignoring or interrupting them when they're talking.

- › Toddler: "Let's talk about something other than trains."
- › Tween: "Here's what I think you should do..."
- › Teen: "I can't stop to listen right now. If it's important enough, you can wait."

Not being prepared or having a plan.

- › Toddler: "I didn't think to bring any with me. Oops!"
- › Tween: "I'm not sure what to do. I didn't expect this."
- › Teen: "We can just wing it. I'm sure it will be fine."

Overwhelming them with social obligations.

- › Toddler: "I invited your entire preschool class!"
- › Tween: "Today's busy! You have piano, then softball, then a sleepover."
- › Teen: "The Jacksons are coming on vacation with us. Won't that be fun?"

Trying to cheer them up or pressuring them to have fun.

- › Toddler: "Go run around with the other kids. You'll feel better."
- › Tween: "Would it kill you to smile? This is supposed to be fun."
- › Teen: "It's no big deal, just look on the bright side..."

Pointing out their mistakes.

- › Toddler: "It's almost perfect, but these two pieces are in the wrong place."
- › Tween: "Remember, this is the question you missed on the practice test."
- › Teen: "You played a good game... except for the four missed free throws."