I-AM-MAD

1. **I**dentify the emotions.

It's best to do this with "feeling" words, like "look", "see", or "sound", rather than "know" or "understand".

Examples: "I see that you are frustrated."
                "You sound aggravated."
                "You look really upset."

2. **A**sk a validating question.

This encourages them to share their feelings about whatever triggered them. Do not use "what's wrong?" If you use "what's wrong?" they will hear "what's wrong with YOU?" Also, don't assume you did anything wrong. Remember, IAAHF (It's All About His/Her Feelings).

Examples: "What happened?" (most effective because it is open-ended, requires more than yes/no answer)
                "Did something go wrong at work [school] today?"
                "Want to talk about it?"

3. **M**ake a validating statement about their emotion.

Validate the feelings expressed in step 2. This helps reinforce that it is natural and valid to feel what they are feeling in the situation. Again, remember IAAHF. Don't defend against blaming or projecting. And don't apologize at this point, even if you are guilty. (Apologies for things you are actually guilty of can come later… after they have returned to their emotional baseline.)

Examples: "Wow, it must have made you feel awful to have done poorly on that test."
                "Yes, it is frustrating when it seems that someone is taking advantage of you."
                "Yeah, that's really disappointing."

4. **M**ake a normalizing statement about their emotion.

By relating the situation as common to all people or "normal" for them, this helps alleviate their stress about feeling judged or unaccepted.

Examples: "I think anyone would feel angry if they had to do that"
                "I would feel the same way if that happened to me."
                "I can see why you feel that way."

5. **A**nalyze the consequences of their behavior.

By examining the consequences of both negative and positive behavior with the person, you help them to separate their emotional reaction from their behavior. The behavior may need to be changed, but the emotions are natural and should not be punished for.

Examples: "When you don't ask questions about something that confuses you, I don't realize that you are struggling, so I can't help you. When you do ask questions though, I can either give you the information you need to solve the problem yourself or we can work together to figure out the best solution to the problem.
                "When you yell at me, I feel disrespected and become upset too. However, when you speak calmly to me, I know you have respect for me, so I am able to listen to you better."
                "When you refuse to talk to me, I don't know what else to do except give you space. When something is bothering you, it's best to be open and honest with me so I know what's going on and don't make the wrong assumptions about what you need.

6. **D**on't solve the problem for them.

Solving one's own problems helps to build self-confidence. Empower the person by getting them to come up with a solution themselves. When given the opportunity in a non-judgmental setting, most people will find that they can come up with solutions to their problems. You can guide them through this process by asking helpful questions to ascertain what they need or want.

Examples: "How would you like to handle this?"
                "What would help you make a better choice next time?"
                "Is there anything I can do to help?"

(Note: Sometimes you have to go back and forth to help them find the most effective solution. They may say, "I don't know" or "I don't care." This can be tough. Go back to step one to deal with any additional emotions that become apparent.)