

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION  
The Key to Successful Interactions with  
Children, Families, and Coworkers



## Here's the plan...

- Self-esteem and communication
- Roadblocks to communication
- Principles of good communication

SELF-ESTEEM AND COMMUNICATION

“???”

Think of something  
someone said to you  
when you were a child.

Why do you still remember  
it?

How did it make you feel?

Words stick with you!

For better...



Or for worse...



Words have power and impact!

*Your Child's Self-Esteem* by Dorothy Briggs:

- We build a picture of ourselves from words, body language, attitudes and judgements of others.
- We judge ourselves according to our observations of ourselves in comparison with others and by others' responses to us.

We have a need to be internally consistent:

negative messages = seeking experiences to confirm  
negative

positive messages = seeking experiences to confirm  
positive

Feelings are put through our “filter.”

Feelings about self affect every aspect of  
your life and how you live it!

Calling for vs. Extending Love

*There's Gotta Be a Better Way: Discipline that Works*  
by Dr. Becky Bailey

Calling  
for love

Extendi  
ng love

Roadblocks to



# The Scenario\*

The attempts to make you  
feel better...

Adapted from *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will  
Talk*  
by Faber & Mazlish

7 Roadblock Responses:

- Denial of feelings
- Philosophical response
- Advice
- Questions
- Defense of Other Person
- Pity
- Amateur Psychoanalysis

“Wow! That must have been **awful** for you – getting attacked like that in front of everyone. I bet you **felt** embarrassed”

***empathetic response***

We communicate with -

- *Words*
- *Tone of voice*
- *Actions*
- *Body Language*

Trustworthy communication =  
all 4 matching!

3 Components of Communication

Speaking  
Listening  
Body Language



Speaking effectively and respectfully takes practice!

“I-messages” can help.

When (describe situation), I feel (describe feeling), because (explain consequences of the behavior for **you**).

When...I feel...because....

Typical Statement

- “You always throw your toys!”
- “You’re always on your phone. You never listen.”
- “That whining is driving me crazy!”

I-message

- “When you throw your toys, I feel worried that the toys will get broken.”
- “When you are looking at your phone, I feel disappointed because I feel like you are not listening to me.”
- “When you whine, I feel frustrated because I can not understand your words.”

## Feelings

### Upset Feelings

Confused  
Disappointed  
Frightened  
Hurt  
Sorry  
Worried  
Sad  
Angry (more specifically?)

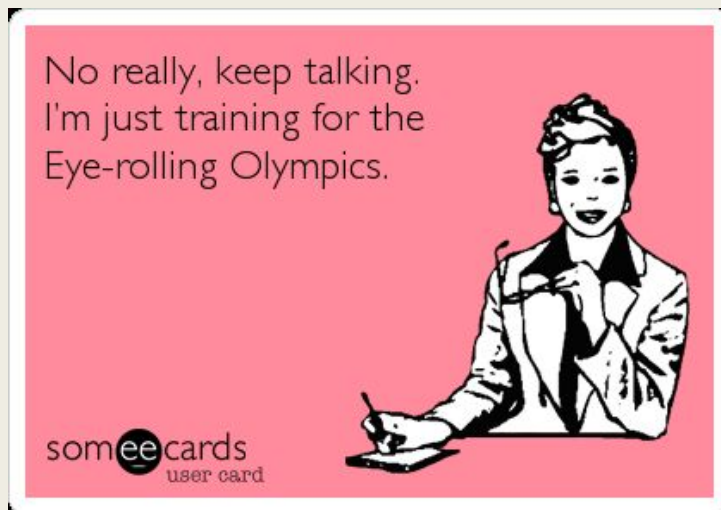
### Happy Feelings

Appreciative  
Happy  
Loved  
Proud  
Excited  
Included  
Glad  
Content

Remember:

- ✓ Children deserve to have genuine, honest, age-appropriate communication.
- ✓ Children need to have the specific, appropriate names for feelings.
- ✓ There are no *bad* feelings.

So what about listening?



*Reflective listening* requires practice, skill, and an attitude of valuing the speaker.

## 2 parts of reflective listening

- Eye contact
- Hearing and defining the feeling

You feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.

“You feel disappointed because we can’t go outside.”

“You’re really excited to get to play outside today!”

## Communication...

is a way to help others help themselves meet their own needs...

and to get your needs met.

## Encouragement vs. Praise

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Boosts the child for the long term  | ✓ Boosts the child temporarily                                |
| ✓ Lets the child <b>feel</b> rewarded | ✓ Rewards the child   |
| ✓ Lets the child value him/herself    | ✓ Judges child according to others – adults or other children |
| ✓ Helps develop positive self-esteem  | ✓ Undermines positive self-esteem                             |

## Guidelines for Encouragement

“Give Encouragement not Praise” Driscoll & Hitz, TXCCQ Sp 94

### **Be specific**

“You and Jimmy played together with the funnels in the sand.”

vs. “You and Jimmy played nicely.”

### **Give encouragement in private; avoid comparison**

“Thank you for coming to circle time, Susan.”

vs. “Look, everyone, how nicely Susan came to circle.”

or “I wish all the other children were as good as you.”

# Guidelines for Encouragement

## **Avoid labeling**

“Ben, thank you for helping.”

vs. “Ben, you are such a good boy.”

## **Focus on the feelings**

“You look happy that you did that puzzle all by yourself.”

vs. “You’re so smart!”

## **Be sincere and direct**

Time is precious!



## Praise

What a good helper you are.

Great job doing that by yourself!

You played so nicely together in the block center.

You are so smart to do that puzzle!

Your artwork is beautiful.

Wow, you are a fast runner!

I wish the other children were such good listeners.

## Encouragement

You worked really hard on that painting and used purple and green.

You're running faster than you did yesterday.

You are listening to me. Thank you.

You look very happy that you were able to do that all by yourself.

You and Kelly played for a long time together in the block center. It looked like you were really enjoying it.

You put every piece of that puzzle in its place.

Thank you for helping us set the table for snack. You gave each of your friends a

## Eliciting Cooperation

*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Faber & Mazlish

*Typical* attempts we use (with children, **other adults** and **ourselves**):

1. Blaming and accusing
2. Name calling
3. Threats
4. Commands
5. Lecturing
6. Warning
7. Martyrdom
8. Comparisons
9. Sarcasm
10. Prophecy

More effective approaches:

1. Describe (what you see, the problem)
2. Give information
3. Say it with one word or a gesture
4. Use I-messages
5. Write a note, use a symbol/picture
6. Give wishes in a fantasy
7. Acknowledge and name feelings

### Questions for you?

- Does my request make sense to the person?
- Is my request reasonable?
- Can I give a choice about **when** to do something?
- Can I give a choice about **how** to do something?
- Can I change the physical environment to invite cooperation?
- Do I spend most of my day asking people to do something or do we spend time being together?
- Did the person hear me?





## Additional Communication Tools

Use humor! 😊

Be creative!

Be positive!!

People respond more positively to *positive* people!

### Alternatives to NO

1. Leave off the “no” and give the reason.
2. Accept and validate the feelings.
3. Describe the problem.
4. Substitute “yes” when possible.
5. Think about the request if possible.

**Anything** you can say  
**negatively**, you can  
rephrase and say positively!

*Adapted from How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Faber & Mazlish*

Our purpose is to speak to what is best in people – their intelligence, their initiative, their sense of responsibility, their sense of humor, their ability to be sensitive to the needs of others.

We want to put an end to talk that wounds the spirit, and search out the language that nourishes self esteem.

We want to create an emotional climate that encourages people to cooperate because they care about themselves, and because they care about us.

We want to demonstrate the kind of respectful communication that we hope people will use with us.