Winning Ways to Talk to Young Children

Presented by:
Tina Heily, Center Director - Enterprise for Progress in the Community (EPIC)
Understanding Children’s Feelings
“Remember When….”

- Can you remember a time when you behaved in a certain way and an adult misunderstood you?
- Maybe a time when you made a mistake and someone thought you did it to be mean or bad?
- Or an occasion when you did something naughty because you were tired or upset?
A Child’s Point of View

- What did the adult say to you?
- Who was the adult?
- Were you punished? How?
- How did you feel?
- Were you misunderstood or treated unfairly?
- How long did your feelings last?
Being Helpful Adults

Now let’s think about how we can use what we remember about our own feelings when we were children to be helpful adults.

- What would you want to say to help that child you remember?
- Would your approach help that child feel better?
- Would that child have a sense of being listened to and understood?
Communicate Acceptance

- When children know you accept them, they are able to grow, change, and feel good about themselves and they are more likely to get along well with others.
- Children are more likely to share their feelings as well as their problems.
Use Door Openers

- Door openers are invitations for children to tell you more and share their ideas and feelings.
- Door openers also tell children that their ideas are important and that they are accepted and respected for what they are saying.
Listen Attentively

- Pay attention to what children say. Young children usually want only 30 seconds or so to share their thoughts, ideas, feelings, discoveries, and enthusiasm.
Use “You” Messages to Reflect Children’s Ideas and Feelings

- “You” messages describe children’s feelings and encourage them to problem-solve.
- When children are allowed to express bad feelings freely, the feelings seem to disappear. On the other hand, hiding bad feelings can be self-destructive.
Do Say “Do”

- Tell children what to do rather than what not to do.
- “DO” rather than “DON’T” may be difficult at first, but the improved relationships that result will make it well worth your thought and practice.
Talk With – Not At - Children

- Talking with children is a two-sided conversation. Talking at children is one-sided.
- Talk with children and listen to what they have to say.
Use “I” Messages to Talk About Your Thoughts and Feelings

- “I” messages are a statement of fact stated by the speaker.
- “I” messages are much better learning tools than “You” messages when children misbehave.
Make Sure You Have an Audience

- Call the child’s name and make sure you have their attention before speaking.
- Allow time for the child to focus on you before you begin speaking.
Keep Your Requests Simple

- Separate requests into simple one step directions.
- Once the child has accomplished a task or followed a request, follow up with another request.
- Be sure to acknowledge the child’s success and accomplishments using “I” messages.
Make Your Important Requests Firmly

- Match your tone of voice to the request.
- Speak firmly and give children the reason for your request.
- Requests delivered in a wishy-washy manner let children think you don’t really care whether they do as you asked them to do.
Talk at Eye-Level

- Eye contact improves communication.
- Kneel or stoop down to the child’s eye level when conversing.
- Make eye contact and use simple body gestures to indicate you are interested and engaged in the conversation you are having with the child.
Be Courteous

- The first step in teaching courtesy is being courteous.
- Role model using words like, please, thank you, and your welcome to children, just as you would with adults.
Let Children Tell Their Stories

- Let children tell their stories without interruption as often as possible.
- Children need practice talking about themselves and they need praise from you at the conclusion of their stories.
- Practice and praise build children’s self-esteem.
Speak Kindly

- Kind words bring happy results.
- Avoid comments or words that shame, blame, or ridicule a child.
- Avoid putting labels on children.
- Kind words help children behave better, try harder, and achieve more.
- Kind words create an atmosphere where problems can be solved and children can feel good about themselves.
Communication Strategies

- Review the situation on your card.
- Think about what you might say and do following the *Winning Ways to Talk to Young Children* tips.
- Answer the following questions:
  - What would you say?
  - What would you do?
  - Why?
Self Test

- Complete the self test at the end of the handout *Winning Ways to Talk to Young Children*.
- Score yourself
- Develop a plan to implement the new strategies you have learned from today’s workshop presentation.
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