

# Appropriate Language Packet

The way we communicate with children affects all aspects of their personal growth. The tone of our voice, our body language, and the words we choose makes an impact on how their self-esteem may develop. We, as early childhood educators and caregivers need to use language of respect whenever interacting with children. It is vital that we never shame, insult, belittle, discourage, or label children, their feelings, decisions they make, or acts they may choose. If a child chooses to do something that may be inappropriate or unsafe, we need to find ways to redirect their behavior without negatively affecting their self-esteem.

## Using the word “NO” Versus “Stop”

“No” is a response to a question, where as “stop” is a direction to an action. At the center we encourage the use of the word “stop” to ensure we are being more specific with children. The word “no” is such an empty response to use with children when trying to stop an unsafe or inappropriate behavior. If you are trying to redirect a child tell them exactly what you expect of them. For instance, if a child is choosing to do something that is hurtful or unsafe you can say, “stop!” but you also need to explain why you are using such a strong tone and why they should stop. Thus saying, “Stop Jacqueline! I’m using a loud voice because I’m not going to let you hit my friend Lyle, it hurts his body,” gives a clear direction and explanation to the child.

## To redirect a behavior you can model the following examples:

“Steve, chairs are for sitting. I’m afraid you might fall off and really hurt yourself.”

“Go around Mora, it’s not safe to run into each other on bikes.”

“Remember to use gentle touches. That hurts James’s head when you hit it.”

“Use your strong words, I can’t understand that sound.”

“If you are angry, you can pound on that pillow or stomp your feet, but I won’t let you hurt my friends.”

“Diamante, take that toy out of your mouth, that’s germy. If you need something to put in your mouth, find a chew toy.”

“If you need my attention, you can say my name instead of screaming, that’s rude and too loud for inside.”

“The cars are not for throwing, it will break them.”

“Instead of pushing Jee-hung, ask him to move over so you can go down the slide.”

## **Labeling**

Children live for your response and reactions. They need and want feedback on everything they say or do. It is so important to make sure that when we comment on something a child does we give them full credit for their actions, while not simply labeling their behavior, for example “Good Job.” Using the phrases, “good job,” “pretty picture,” or words like bad, cute, great, fancy, nice, and handsome provide labels for children. These types of responses convey the idea that what they do has to be a certain way. These responses do not give credit to the child; we are just labeling their behavior according to our general standards. Also, often times the same phrases are used over and over, like “Good Job” with no connection to a child’s actions, thus making them empty comments. At Community Child Care Center we avoid using the words, “good” and “bad” as they simply label people or materials and place judgment unnecessarily. This teaches children at a young age stereotypes and bias.

**When children accomplish a task they have been working hard on you can respond the following ways:**

“You did it! You got your boots on all by yourself.”

“Way to go! You found your shoes.”

“Wow, you worked hard on that puzzle and now you put it all together.”

“That’s a tall tower, look how many blocks you stacked on top of each other.”

“Way to pull your pants up.”

“You picked up all the cars you were playing with, thanks for doing that.”

“You put your hat on all by yourself, way to go!”

“Wow, you thought up the idea of putting those blocks together so you can drive your cars on them.”

**All these types of responses give a child a sense of accomplishment, a sense that they were able to do it by themselves. This increases their self-confidence and self-esteem, which is vital to children’s emotional growth.**

When a child creates something, it is essential to respond in ways that credit their ability. Here are some examples:

“Wow, look at all the colors you chose to use on your painting.”

“You chose bright colors; I see the colors red, blue, and yellow!”

“You filled your whole paper up with different colors of paint!”

“It looks like you chose to separate your pieces of play dough.”

“I see that you worked hard on that picture.”

“Way to shake up your bag, look, the glitter is moving with the paint.”

### **Examples for Different Situations**

\*We work to avoid phrases such as, “you need” or “I want you to” as it gives children the sense that there is a choice in a situation. It also assumes that the teacher knows what a child needs or that the child will care what you want them to do. These assumptions can lead to power struggles, which can be avoided with the language we use.

#### **1. Children who are in conflict over toy:**

Toddler: With younger toddlers- “Who had this toy? Then we can find you another one and you will have to be next.”

With older toddlers - “What can we do to solve this problem?”

Preschool: First stop any hurtful behavior. Then gather as much information as possible. “I need to hear from both of you to help.” “I’ll hold this toy until we figure out what happened.” Or “Stop! It looks like you both want to play with this toy at the same time. Let’s decide if that can be done. Here let me hold that while we decide together.” This takes the focus off the toy and will allow children to focus on the details. Ask children why they are arguing and make clear to them what their problem is. Encourage children to problem solve. Giving the answer to the children would be the last choice. Encourage children to share and take turns. If the waiting child is sad say, “I hear how sad you sound. It is hard to wait for your turn.” Then help the child redirect.

#### **2. Children do not want to be diapered or toileted:**

Toddler: “It is not a choice. It’s time to go to the bathroom but you can decide which diaper you want, which toilet you want to use and where you want to stand at the sink. You can even wash your hands by yourself.” These all empower the child with choices to make in a situation where they may feel like they have no choice. Also remember to give children warning before you expect them to use the bathroom. If the child is resistant to leave a toy, say “We can save your toy by the bathroom for when you are done.”

Preschool: Give children warnings. “Maya, it will be your turn in the bathroom in two minutes.” Or “This is the time where we all take a break to use the toilet. Then we can play in the room.” If the

child is resistant, say “It is not a choice. It’s time to go to the bathroom but you can decide which toilet you want to use.” “You can either go into the bathroom and toilet by yourself or I will help you.”

Toileting is an important part of the daily curriculum in both classrooms. It is a time where children can explore themselves and their self-help abilities. Offering them choices and options to do things themselves gives them a sense of accomplishment and helps their self-esteem.

### 3. Children who do not want to lie down for nap:

Toddler: “It is not a choice. Your body needs to rest so you can play this afternoon.” Or “I can see/hear that you do not want to lie on your cot but it’s not a choice, you can rest on your cot by yourself or I can help you.”

Preschool: “Put your head down on your cot and relax your body. Our bodies need rest so we have energy for later.” Offer them a backrub, stuffed animal or soft toy to help them rest their bodies. Give them a choice to lay down by themselves or with help.

### 4. Child who has been hurt by another child:

Toddler: “I’m sorry you were hurt. That wasn’t okay. Tell (child) to STOP!” Or “I’m sorry you got hurt.” Make sure the child who got hurt used words with the child that did the hurting. If not tell the child who got hurt, “Tell him/her to stop and tell them you didn’t like it.”

Preschool: If someone comes to report something to you that happened to them. “What did you tell them about that?” Hopefully child was able to tell other child to stop and this should be reinforced. “It is not safe to throw sand.” Then praise child for using their words. Also add, “I’m sad that you’ve been hurt. How can I help you feel better?” (ice pack or hug) Make sure injured child is okay first and then find out what they need. Have the child that did the hurting help to assist the injured child. Explain the rules and the reasons for them. “Looks like Jim is really hurt. Maybe you could ask if he is okay.”

### 5. Child who has hurt another child:

Toddler: “You may not play until (child) feels better and is ready to play. It is not okay to hurt other children.”

Preschool: Stop the child who is doing the hurting by saying “Stop, you are hurting so and so.” Check to make sure the hurt child is okay. Then ask the child who did the hurting what happened and if hitting is okay or if it solves the problems. Depending on

responses ask the child what they could do instead of hitting, reminding the child of using their words.

\*Remember to always give the hurt child more attention and attention first. The ideal situation would be for one staff member to work with the hurt child and another staff member to work with the one who was doing the hurting.

6. Child who is disrupting during a group activity:

Toddler: In the toddler room children are not expected to participate so other activities are available for redirection if they are too disruptive.

Preschool: Have the available staff sit by the child. Give that child something to hold. Give that child a reminder of your expectations during group time. (That they can sit in the quiet space or circle table doing a quiet activity if they do not wish to join the group.)

7. Child who is using toys/materials in a way that may break the toy:

Toddler: “Stop. When you use the toy that way, it will break.” Give an example of what the child can do with the toy.

Preschool: “Let me show you a safe way to use the \_\_\_\_\_.”

“Please stop! I’m worried that it may break and then we won’t be able to use the toy anymore.”

These all demonstrate how to use the toy appropriately while also explaining the consequences of having a broken toy.

8. Child who does not want to end one activity and move on to the next one:

Toddler: “You’ll be able to do this activity again. Right now its time to go to the \_\_\_\_\_.”

“It’s hard to leave an activity that you like. Right now it’s not a choice, you can come join the rest of the group or I can help you.”

Preschool: “It looks like you’re really having fun with \_\_\_\_\_. Right now it’s time to clean them up so we can go \_\_\_\_\_. If you can put these away, I will put these away. These toys will be here later for you to play with some more.”

9. Child who is feeling sad about parent leaving, lost chance at activity, having to wait for turn, being misunderstood, etc:

Toddler: “We know you are sad, mom will be back later.”

“This might be hard for you to do. You can do that activity later lets do this now.”

Preschool: “What’s the matter, why are you crying?” Reaffirm the child’s feelings and then give the child some choices on ways to say good-bye or another activity to do to give child some power since loss of power may be felt for situation they are feeling sad about.

“I’m sorry you are so sad. Can I give you a hug?”