

Valley Oak Children's Services



Early Childhood Education Services

GUIDES IN SPEECH & ACTION

GUIDES IN SPEECH

1. State suggestions or directions in a positive rather than a negative form.

A positive suggestion is one that tells a child what to do instead of pointing out what he is not to do. A positive direction is less likely to arouse resistance. It makes help seem constructive rather than limiting. When we make suggestions in a positive way, we are giving the child a good social tool to use. To put directions positively represents a step in developing a more positive attitude inside ourselves toward children's behavior.

2. Give a child a choice only when you intend to leave the situation up to him.

Choices are legitimate. With increasing maturity, one makes an increasing number of choices. But there are decisions that a child is not ready to make because of limited capacities and experience. We must avoid offering a choice when we are not really willing to let the child decide the question. It is confusing to a child to be asked a question when what is wanted is not information but only confirmation. Be sure your questions are legitimate ones.

3. Your voice is a teaching tool. Use words and a tone of voice that will help the child to feel confident and reassured.

A quiet, firm manner of speaking conveys confidence. It may be necessary to speak firmly, but it is never necessary to raise one's voice. The most effective speech is simple, direct and slow. It is always better to move nearer to the person to whom you are speaking, rather than to call or shout across any play area. Your words will get better reception if they are spoken quietly, face to face.

4. Avoid trying to change behavior by methods which may lead to loss of self-respect, such as shaming a child or labeling behavior "naughty" or "selfish."

Neither children nor adults are likely to develop desirable behavior patterns as a result of fear, shame or guilt. In learning constructive ways of guiding behavior, our first step is to eliminate destructive patterns, gestures, expressions, tones of voice and words that pass judgment. A child will be helped if we accept her as she is and try to make it possible for her to find some success, rather than if we reprove her because she does not meet our standards.

5. Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another or by encouraging competition.

Children who are encouraged to be competitive are very likely to quarrel more with one another. In competition, someone always loses and is likely to feel hurt and resentful. Competition does not build friendly, social feelings. It also creates problems within the child. Neither constant success nor too many failures prepare a child well for what he will meet later in a competitive world. Avoid competitive kinds of motivation until children have developed ego strength and can balance off failures with success.

6. Redirect the child by suggesting an activity that is related to his own purposes or interests whenever possible.

We will be more successful in changing children's behavior if we attempt to turn their attention to an act which has equal value for them. Suggestions for acting differently will take into account the different meanings in behavior. Redirection should help the child face the problem by showing how it can be met, not by diverting the child.

7. The effectiveness of a suggestion or direction may depend largely on its timing.

The timing of a suggestion may be as important as the suggestion itself. Advice given too soon deprives a child of a chance to try to work things out for herself. A suggestion made too late may

have lost any chance of being successful. Through experience, one can increase one's skill in giving a suggestion at the moment when it will do the most good.

GUIDES IN ACTION

1. Avoid making models in any art medium for children to copy.

Art is valuable because it is a means of self-expression. The young child needs avenues of expression. His speech is limited. His feelings are strong. If he has models before him, he may be blocked in using art as a means of self-expression. He will be less likely to be creative and more likely to be limited in trying to copy. Art then becomes only another area where he strives to imitate the adult who can do things much better.

2. Give the child the minimum of help in order that she may have the maximum chance to grow in independence, but give help when the child needs it.

Children's self-confidence is increased by independent solving of problems. There are all kinds of ways to help a child help himself rather than stepping in and doing it for him. In leaving the child free to satisfy his strong growth impulse to be independent, we support his feeling of confidence in himself: "I can do this all by myself." To let the child do things for herself does not mean denying her requests for help. When a child asks for help, we listen to her request and answer it in a way that will make her less helpless and dependent. Confidence in self is based on a foundation of trust in others.

3. Make your directions effective by reinforcing them when necessary.

A verbal suggestion, even when given positively, may not be enough in itself. A glance at the right moment, moving nearer to a child, a verbal reminder, and actual physical help are all techniques. One common fault of parents and teachers is using too many words. Have confidence in the child's ability to hear and respond, then add different techniques together until successful, rather than relying solely on words.

4. Forestalling is the most effective way of handling problems. Learn to foresee and prevent rather than mop-up after a difficulty.

Learning to prevent problems is important because many times children do not profit from making mistakes OR the consequences would be too serious OR the child may interpret consequences incorrectly. Effective guidance depends on knowing how to forestall and prevent trouble as much as on knowing what to do when trouble occurs.

5. When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained.

In a well-planned environment there will not be many "no's" – but the "no's" that are necessary will be clearly defined, and the child will understand them. The adult must be the one responsible for limiting children so that they do not come to harm, harm others or destroy property. Children will feel more secure with adults who can take on this responsibility.

6. Be alert to the total situation. Use the most strategic positions for supervising children.

Observation of the total situation is essential to effective guidance; for children's safety, for helping children, and for enrichment of experience. Trouble is seldom avoided by a suggestion given at a distance.

7. The health and safety of the children are a primary concern at all times.

The skillful teacher never relaxes watchfulness for things that affect the health and safety of children.

8. Observe and take notes; increase your own awareness of what goes on.

Underlying all these guides is the assumption that teaching is based on the ability to observe behavior objectively and to evaluate its meaning. Skill in observing and recording is essential in building understanding.

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