

Effective Speech: Creating Positive Verbal Environments

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This document is comprised of writings from Chick Moorman, specifically his book *Teacher Talk* (co-written with Nancy Webber), Parent Talk Focus Cards, as well as the expertise and experiences (30 years worth!) of the staff at the Montessori School of Bowling Green.

Chick Moorman is a professional speaker with over 40 years experience as an educator. His mission is to empower and inspire parents and educators so they can in turn empower and inspire children.

Teachers at MSBG have been trained in his techniques. The school owns several of his books and his websites offer a wealth of information. <http://www.chickmoorman.com> and <http://www.uncommon-parenting.org>.

Effective Praise

Effective use of praise encourages children to have intrinsic motivation, independence, autonomy, and inner peace.

- 1. Evaluative** - evaluates or represents a judgment. Phrases such as “good job” “super” “excellent” are evaluative. Evaluative praise helps the person feel good temporarily but may cause a dependency on others for self-image.

Notes: _____

- 2. Descriptive** - describes accomplishments or situations and affirms rather than evaluates. For example, describe the child’s painting when you they ask you to look at it.

“I see you used the colors red and yellow.”

“I see you used the shapes of a square and a rectangle in your drawing of the house.”

Descriptive language allows the child to make an internal evaluation.

Notes: _____

- 3. Appreciative** - tells the child what behavior is helpful, explains any positive effects and shares appreciation.

“Thank you for wiping up the spilled water from the floor. Now I know everyone will be safe walking there.”

The child’s self-talk is, “I can make a difference. I am worthwhile.”

Notes: _____

Effective Verbal Phrases

These phrases create a positive verbal environment and build mutual respect.

1. Check Yourself.

Example: "Check yourself to see if you are sitting with your legs crossed and your hands in your lap."

When you use this phrase you are sending the children silent messages,

"I see you as a responsible for you."

"I see you as someone who can handle it."

Notes: _____

2. Check it out inside.

Example: "If you are not sure about an action, check it out inside." (This statement is especially helpful at the elementary level and beyond.)

This phrase helps children learn to listen to their own inner knowing, the wise part within. When you can trust your own inner authority, you are more likely to resist peer pressure and the desire to please others at your own expense.

Notes: _____

3. Choose, Decide, Act, Pick.

Example: "I noticed you decided to keep working on that art project even though it was frustrating for you."

Repetitious use of these words helps children appreciate that they do indeed choose.

Notes: _____

4. Please make a decision.

Example: "Please make a decision to follow the rules or choose a different activity."

When you choose language that focuses on the child's decision, you stay clear of the persecutor role. Both adult and child more clearly understand that the child is making a decision to choose a consequence; you are not arbitrarily deciding to punish her.

Notes: _____

5. Next time...

Example: "Next time, please use your words to share your anger with your friend."

"Next time" helps to plant positive pictures in the child's head of what you want to happen in the future. It focuses the child's attention on what you expect to happen next time. "Next time" is an alternative to "don't." "Don't" criticizes while "next time" instructs.

Notes: _____

6. Please make a different choice.

Example: "I'm feeling distracted by your behavior, please make a different choice."

This message communicates respect and says, "I see you as responsible for your own actions. You control your behavior. You choose your responses to life."

Notes: _____

**7. Thank you for sharing that. It's not a choice.
(No' is not a choice.)**

Example: Child says, "I don't want to go outside."
Adult says, "Thank you for sharing that. It's not a choice."

The first half of the statement acknowledges, "I understand you would like things to be different." The second part sets a boundary and shows some things are not a choice.

Notes: _____

**8. Act as if you can.
Pretend like you know how.
What would you do if you did know how?**

"Acting as if" gets the children moving. You can adjust from there. Remember, trying doesn't work. Doing does.

Notes: _____

9. Different people have different needs.

“That’s not fair” is a common childhood complaint. This kind of talk helps children understand that **fair** means more than everyone doing the same thing at the same time. Being fair is really about tolerance and respect for the differences among people.

Notes: _____

10. Touch each other gently.

May be used, when appropriate, as the alternative, “Keep your hands to yourself.”

Some researchers believe that a minimum of eight hugs each day are needed to maintain mental health.

Notes: _____

11. I don’t like what I just heard. If you’re angry, tell me another way.

Sometimes children’s name calling is directed at adults. “That’s stupid.” “I hate you.”
The effective phrase helps show respect for the adult and the child while setting a clear boundary.

Notes: _____

12. Make a picture in your mind.

Positive picturing can be used with all age levels. Positive picturing will help you influence how children see themselves and consequently, how they perform.

Notes: _____
