

F E B R U A R Y
N E W S L E T T E R

INVITATIONS FOR LEARNING

FROM DAN HODGINS

DKJ5075@AOL.COM

Say What You Mean....

Change Unclear Messages

- "Get ready to go outside" instead say, "Put your coat on so we can go outside"
- "Use your walking feet" instead say, "Run over here"
- "That's not nice to push" instead say, "It is fun to push, let me find something you can push"
- "Use your inside voice" instead say, "Let me find a place you can use that voice"

Clarifying messages is an important method for guidance and discipline. Not only does it mean good communication, but also it can prevent misunderstandings.

Clarification means that when you request things from children, you do so in clear, precise terms that leave no room for misunderstanding. How many times have you given a direction or made a comment, to an adult, that you thought was perfectly clear only to find out that the receiver of the comment heard something totally different than you expected.

For example, "Will you start the washing and I will finish it when I get home?" You were expecting that the person who received that request would put the

clothes in the washing machine to start the process and you would finish it when you return. Instead the receiver sorts the clothes and leaves them on the floor for you to do.

In making requests and comments to children, be sure children understand what you are asking. Consider their individual abilities and development. Don't expect a three year old to respond with the same understanding of a five year old.

Keep the words as simple as possible. State exactly what you want children to do, avoiding lengthy rationale.

If the message is unclear to children, they will interpret it anyway they wish. The interpretation may be completely different than the message sent.

For more information on workshops contact me at:
DKJ5075@aol.com.
or visit my website:
www.danieljhodgins.com

Examples of Unclear Messages:

- *“Use your inside voice”* - what the heck is an inside voice? Make sure that children do not get the opinion that quieter children are better than louder children. Make sure you provide areas for quiet children and loud children.
- *“Use your walking feet”* - children think they are walking when they are running. Their brains say to their bodies, “run a lot” here. Provide places for them to run.
- *“Be nice to your friends”* - what is nice? what is a friend? Both of these words are very abstract and often relate to actions not feelings. State exactly what you want children to do.
- *“Use kinder words”* - just what is a kinder word? Children who call other children names do not view it as an unkind action, but a voice of power. State what word/s you want the child to use.
- *“In five more minutes it will be time to clean up”* - this is the most common unclear message that I hear everywhere. The first part of the message is difficult for children to grasp because it involves the concept of “time”. (A cognitive concept that often doesn’t develop until the age of nine.) The second part involves children in an action that is not frequently seen as part of the play experience. Use a visual reminder for time (ex. sand timer) and avoid expecting that children are going to see the essential need for cleaning up.