



Strategies for Teaching Language: Helping Your Child Use Words that are Respectful, Empathetic, and Cooperative

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STEPS FOR HELPING CHILDREN ACT IN WAYS THAT ARE RESPECTFUL, EMPATHETIC AND COOPERATIVE

- 1. Name the behaviors you want and show how they connect to and benefit the Home Team**
- 2. Explain what the words and concepts mean**
- 3. One at a time, choose the specific behavior that you and your child decide together that you want to improve**
- 4. Model the target behavior**
- 5. Help to make a clear picture of what the whole scene looks like when you all act in this way, and show how it is better than when you don't act in this way**
- 6. Praise and reinforce anyone in the family who shows they are able to think and act in this way.**

1

Name it and Connect it

2

Explain it

3

Choose it

4

Model it

5

Picture it

6

Reinforce it

1. Establishing a Team: Use language that shows we are on the same Team in support of each other: “we” and “us” not “me” vs. “you”

The whole family can start thinking they are part of one Home Team!

Emphasize with your child and the rest of the family that “we are all living and working together as one Team”.

- helps reduce a sense of isolation**
- helps to develop a sense of belonging**
- helps to develop that we want to trust that we can feel safe when we are together**

We use language that focuses on this Team concept.

We are not only benefiting ourselves, we are benefiting the Team!

If we make a change in how we act with our Team, it benefits all of us! This is our reason to act in a better way.



These are some things you can say to help your child think they are part of your Home Team:

You are not alone; I am here with you.

We are living and working together as one Team.

I want to show you I care about you, and hope you want to show you care about me.

Let's start talking about ourselves as a Team.

Let's name our Team. It is great to belong to this Team.

Let's work together to make our Team great.

How can we act on our Team so we all feel safe and cared for?

Is there something we can change in what we do or what we say to help make our Team great? Any positive changes will benefit us all.

It is Powerful to Use Team-building Language!

Use “we” and “us” instead of “you” vs. “me”.
Think first of the words you use when you are talking with your child, and it will be more likely that your child will positively respond to these words and use them too.

Avoid:

“**You need to...**”
“**You should...**”
“**Why don’t you ever...**”
“**You never...**”

Replace with:

“**In order to help the Team, let’s think about....**”

“**It would be best for the Team if we all...**”

“**This would be a great time to do for the Team.**”

“**I love it when you.... It would be so great for our Team if you did that more often.”**

Thank you for because it shows you are thinking about helping our Home Team.

2. Understanding Concepts: Teach the meaning of the vocabulary involved in acting respectful, empathetic and cooperative and clearly provide examples of this behavior

We cannot expect our children to act in a respectful, empathetic or cooperative way if they do not understand what those words and concepts mean.

They can begin to act in these ways if they know what these words mean, and have an idea of what this behavior looks like, sounds like, and feels like.

They also can learn why and how this behavior benefits the Home Team.

We take the time to explain all of this at a level that our children can understand.

What does it mean to act in a respectful way? Let's teach it!



Acting respectful means you notice the people and things in your life and treat them with care.

- we are making choices with our words and actions so the people with us feel comfortable and safe
- We help people on our Teams feel like what they need is as important as what we need

Some examples of what respectful behavior looks like on our Team:

(Model this behavior to show what it sounds like and looks like and feels like!)

- We choose considerate and polite words.
- We use a positive and pleasant tone of voice
- We look at each other when we are talking to each other.
- We answer each other right away!



We also explain why this respectful behavior is one we should choose when with our Team.

Why is acting in a respectful way good for our Team?

- When we look at other people when they are talking to us, we show them that we are interested in them and what they are saying. It makes them feel good and lets them feel they are important enough to us to pay attention to them.
- When we choose to use a positive and pleasant tone of voice, people on our Team feel comfortable being with us.
- When we answer each other right away, it shows we were listening and that we care about what was said.

What does it mean to act in an empathetic way? Let's teach it!



Acting in an empathetic way means you are showing you are aware of how others around you feel.

You are showing you care about other people's feelings and want to help them.

To teach this concept, we need to be comfortable in talking about how we feel so our child can know how we feel.

If a child cannot figure out how we feel, we will need to tell them directly how we feel and what it is that we are doing with our body, our face or our words that are the clues that the child can use to begin to tell how we are feeling.

Some examples of what empathetic behavior looks like and sounds like on our Team.

(Model this behavior to show what it sounds like and looks like and feels like.)

- We look at the other person and listen to what they are saying.
- We make our best guess about what they are thinking and how they are feeling.
- We think about making a choice in what we say or do that will make the scene better for the other person.
- We can show we care with an action or with caring words.
- We can give a smile or a hug.
- We listen!
- We can make a comment and say, “Good for you” when someone is feeling good and “Too bad” if someone is feeling sad or bad.



We will also explain why this behavior is one we should choose when we are with our Team.

Why is acting in an empathetic way good for our Team?

- We show we are taking the time to think about the other person and how they feel.
- We are also showing we are thinking about how to make things better for other people on our Team. This shows we care and can make other people feel good.

What does it mean to act in a cooperative way? Let's teach it!



Acting in a cooperative way means you are working easily and peacefully with people so you can all get things done that you want to do. It means you take turns and share with others.

A more advanced concept that might be taught is that acting in a cooperative way means that we are able to compromise with others.

- This means we can be satisfied getting some of what we want instead of having to have everything that we want. If we do this with another person, each person gets some of what they want so both sides can feel like they are getting what they need.**

Some examples of what cooperative behavior looks like and sounds like on our Team.

(Model this behavior to show what it sounds like and looks like and feels like!)

- I listen to directions and follow them.
- I choose to act in a way that is safe, logical and good for all.
- I wait patiently for others to share their ideas.
- I take turns listening to and talking with others on my Teams so we both feel like we have been heard. We then can work together to plan what to do next to get our needs met.



Why is acting in a cooperative way good for our Team?

- We get along peacefully!
- Everyone can feel like they are important.
- It makes life easier for everyone.
- We get things done!



- Don't overwhelm children in attempts to instruct them.
- Find examples in day-to-day life when it is important to act in these ways, or when it would be good to make a better choice to act in these ways.
- Tell stories about people who act in these ways and why it benefits them and the people around them.
- Stories can be told at whatever level of language matches your child's ability to understand language in general.



3. Setting a Target: Choose the behavior that your child agrees can be improved that would make a difference in Home Team interactions

- Guide your child to think about something they do that they can do more frequently to help the Team.
- Start with a behavior that already is occurring that can be increased instead of focusing on a behavior that your child has not yet ever exhibited.
- Work together to describe and name the goal which will be the behavior that will make a difference to the Team when it is shown more often.



4. Modeling the Target: Clearly provide examples of preferred behavior so the child has a better chance of knowing what thoughts, words and actions to choose

What does modeling mean?

Modeling means we are showing the target behavior by doing it first ourselves.

Do what I do, not only what I say!!!

Show your child what that behavior looks like.

- This is the exact behavior that our Team is looking for.
- This is the exact behavior that we can do more of the time.

We are working on this together! *I will remember to act in this way and that will help you to remember to act in this way too.*





How does this feel? *This feels good!!*

Stop to talk about how good it feels to act this way as it is happening:

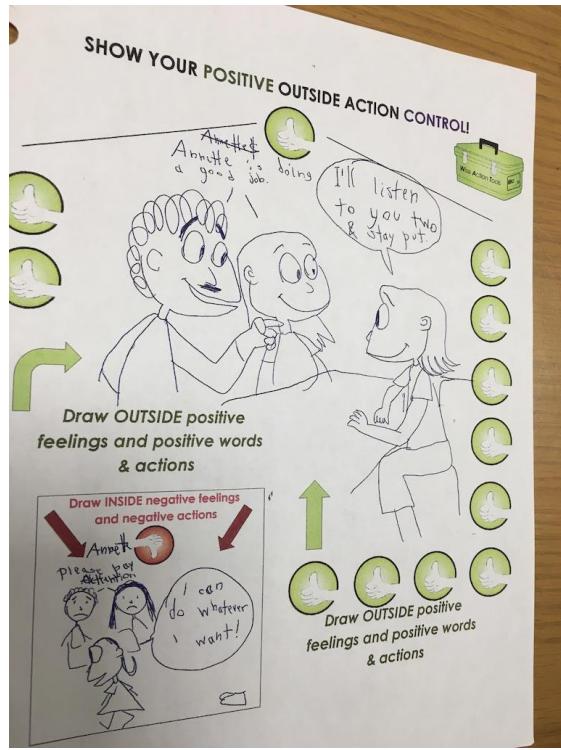
Let's talk about how good it feels to act this way.

Notice how it feels: Doesn't it feel good when we act this way?

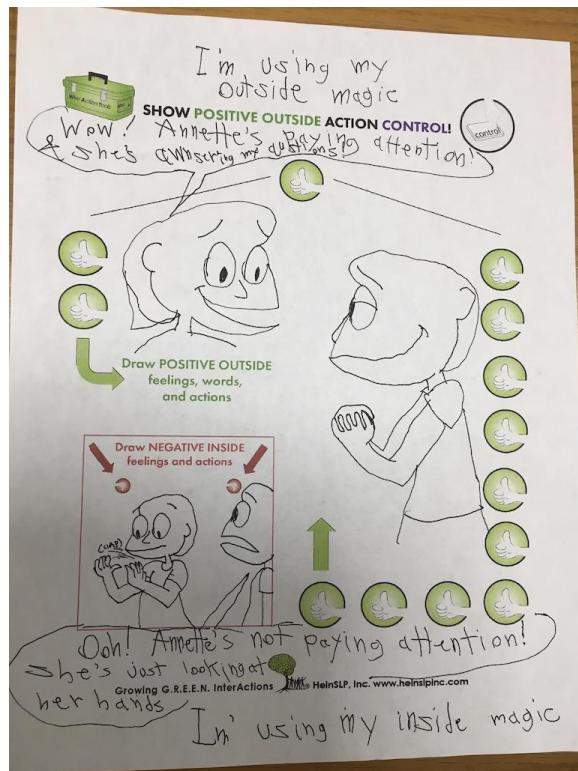
Focusing on how good positive behavior feels increases the chances that the child will want to act in this way again.

5. Picturing Better Choices: Develop a picture of what the better behavior choice looks like and the positive consequences for all involved.

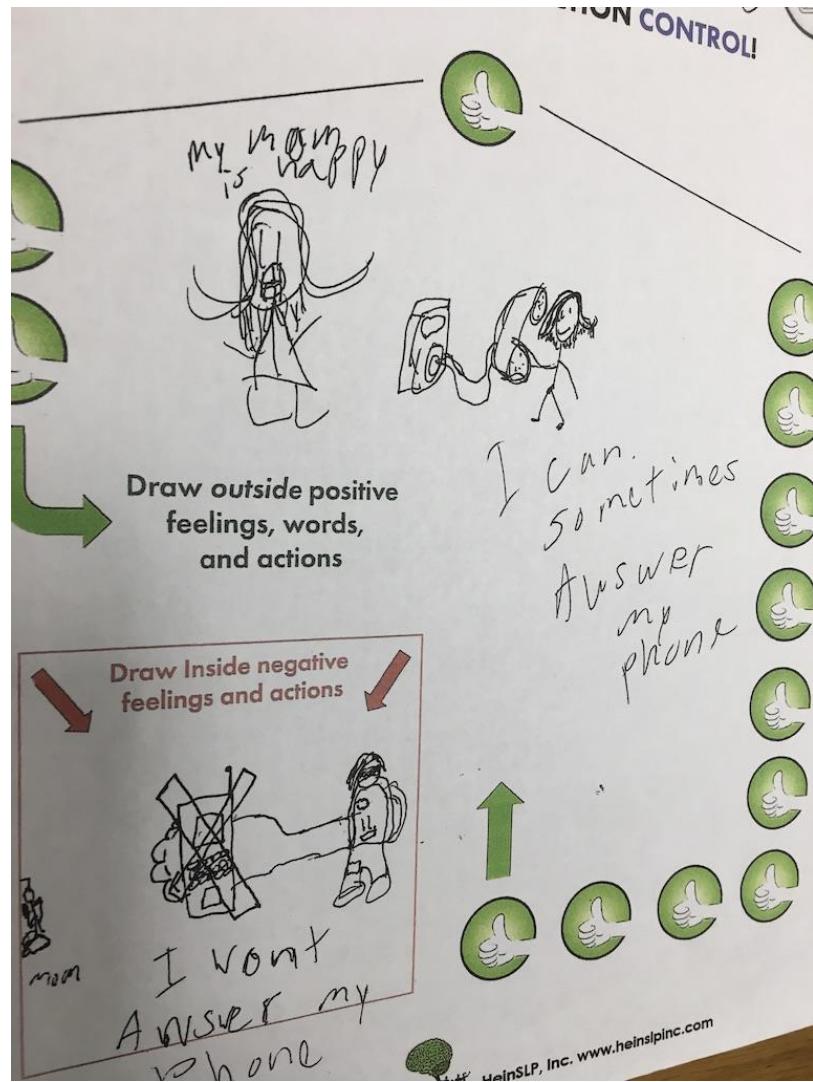
- Figure out a way to picture this better way of acting, this better choice.
- This helps the child remember it, practice thinking the thoughts out loud, and saying the words out loud.
- If we can draw what the positive action looks like and add the words that describe what it is and how it is positively affecting the Team, we are less likely to have to repeat all of our instruction.
- If we show the picture of the positive action, it will remind the child of the target action and its positive consequences. We can show the picture, and it will be a signal to think about making the behavior choice that is more respectful, empathetic and cooperative.



I CAN CHOOSE TO SIT STILL AND PAY ATTENTION WHEN SOMEONE IS TALKING TO ME INSTEAD OF ROAMING AROUND THE ROOM!



I CAN CHOOSE TO LOOK AT THE PERSON WHO IS ASKING ME A QUESTION AND KEEP MY HANDS IN MY LAP.



**I CAN CHOOSE TO ANSWER MY PHONE
WHEN MY MOM CALLS ME!**

6. Reinforcing Positive Behavior: Explicitly reinforce all movements toward positive behavior

- Reinforce positive behavior by noticing when it occurs and providing verbal or visual praise!
- Take the time to positively reinforce the behavior to show how important it is to you and the whole Team.
- Reinforce any approximations to the behavior. This means to start off noticing the first glimmers of the behavior. When your child starts to make these better action choices, they don't have to be perfect. We want the child to start feeling what it's like to have someone notice they are taking steps toward choosing these positive behaviors. They can get closer to the target with time and practice.

- As much as possible, avoid reinforcing negative behavior. Instead, spend more time and energy catching your children acting in a positive way and letting them know you notice their efforts!
- Express to the child how good it feels that all the members of the Team are making their best efforts to take their best actions.

**Keep reviewing,
keep modeling
and keep reinforcing!!!**

- You can put up goal charts to show how each Team member is improving and also show how the whole Team is improving.
- If your child can read and write, you can write reinforcement notes for each other when you see the positive behavior.
- You can show how much this positive behavior matters by taking the time to talk about the positive behavior that was described in the notes.
- Some families include this positive sharing in weekly family meetings!

You now have some language and some strategies to help your child be a part of your Home Team and start to take steps to act more respectful, empathetic and cooperative with the other members of the Team.

Remember these steps for improving your child's behavior:

1 Name it and Connect it	2 Explain it	3 Choose it
4 Model it	5 Picture it	6 Reinforce it

For a copy of this handout or if you would like me to answer any questions about this presentation, you may contact me at:

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Here's to having improved interactions with your children!

-HERB HEIN, MMSc, CCC-SLP