

## Why Language is Essential in Developing Effective Communication Skills

As educators and as parents, we sometimes find ourselves in cycles of words and directions that seem to go unheard by children. As adults, the frustration of undesired responses or non-responsiveness can cause us to react in ineffective ways. It's important that we use only tone and words that are necessary for eliciting an effective response from children.

A child's brain is vastly different from an adults. Children are literal and often unable to break down complicated requests. They will respond to questions, comments, and demands differently than adults. As adults, it's important to be specific and direct in our words, calm in our tone and aware of our body language. These factors, along with the phrases below can be a powerful tool when communicating effectively with children.

## Wildflower Language Tips For Children

Below, in the left column, are common phrases we often hear from children. In the right column are suggested responses that we, as adults, can model and share with children to teach them more effective communication skills that build self-esteem and positive social relationships.

<b>Common Phrases</b>	<b>Try This Instead</b>
Don't do that.	We can play safe together.
I can't do it.	I can do hard things. Let's do this together.
You're not supposed to do that.	That choice isn't taking care of myself/ yourself/the environment (the 3 classroom rules).
I hate this. This sucks	I don't care for... That's not my favorite. I haven't learned to like that yet.
It's not fair.	We'll all get a chance when the time is right.
Give me that.	May I have a turn when you are done?
Don't sit by me. Go away, stop following me.	I am still your friend but could I have some space please?
Telling secrets or whispering.	Let's make sure our words are safe and taking care of everyone.

# Wildflower Language Tips For Adults

Below are phrases that adults can use when talking to children. Remember to be specific in your words and maintain calm body language and vocal tone.

Common Phrases	Try This Instead
Listen to your teachers.	Our words are important so that everyone is safe.
Calm down.	When you are ready, let's take a deep breath.
Why did you do that?	You really wanted that truck, let's see how we can do it differently next time.
Good job.	That took a lot of work/patience/effort.
Be careful.	Listen to your body. Take your time. Use two hands.
What's wrong?	It looks like you have something on your mind, let me know if you would like to talk about it.
Don't talk to me like that.	You can use a calm voice when talking to me.
Come here now.	Please stand close to me so I know you're safe.
I am proud of you.	Wow, you must be proud of yourself.
Stop that.	You can choose this or you can choose that.
Clean up now.	What is your plan for cleaning up?
Go potty now.	Let's go potty so we can take care of our bodies.
Lay down now.	Rest your body so you have energy to play.
Stop hitting.	Please stop using your hands to hit, that's not what hands are for.
You're so smart.	Wow, you caught on quickly, how can I challenge your brain to grow?

## Additional Communication Strategies we use at Wildflower ELC:

- **If/then Statements:** If we all clean up together, then we can go on a walk.
- **When/then Statements:** When we get our shoes on, then we can go outside and play.
- **Redirection:** I see you're kicking, we could kick a ball outside.
- **Choices:** You can choose to build nicely or you can choose to find something else to play.
- **Modeling:** The way we talk to children and other adults (ie. teachers raising their hand to speak or share during group time).
- **Prioritizing child conversations** vs. adult/adult conversations.
- **"Let me check with all the teachers first"** (shows teamwork and respect for other adults in room)
- Being mindful of your own **volume** (calm bodies= calm bodies)
- Being the respected and respectful adult in the room with your words and actions
- Actively moving around indoors and outdoors provides many opportunities to use these language skills