

# Communication Handout

Oct 2, 2012 Communication Lecture & Activities

## Communicating with Young Children

Information from 2000 Child Welfare League of America (2000)

### Guidelines for more effective & fun communication:

- Get your head physically on the same level as the child's.
- Make eye contact.
- Use a gentle touch.
- Speak with firmness, not anger, pleading, or whining.
- Give clear & consistent instructions.
- Avoid confusing contradictions or mixed messages.
- Don't give too many instructions at once.
- Allow children to make choices appropriate to their age level.
- Affection is often shown nonverbally. Be sure to hold a child for comfort and share smiles and hugs.
- Make every effort to keep promises.
- Avoid talking about children in their presence or saying things you do not want repeated.
- State things in terms of how a child's behavior is affecting you. This becomes more effective as the child grows older.
- Notice your body language.
- Don't try to trick children.
- Use Positive Direction Instead of Negative Statements:  
Instead of: *Don't rock your chair!*  
Try: *Sit on your chair.*  
Instead of: *Don't touch anything, you're all dirty!*  
Try: *Wipe your hands on this towel.*  
Instead of: *Don't be so loud!*  
Try: *Talk in a quiet voice.*  
Instead of: *No you can't play outdoors, we have to go to the store!*  
Try: *Yes, you may play outdoors when we get back from the store.*

### Ways to use Words & Actions

1. Often, it's helpful to say something indicating your confidence in the child's ability and willingness to learn.
2. In some situations, after firmly stating what is not to be done, you can demonstrate "how we can do it," or a better way.
3. Toddlers are not easy to distract, but frequently they can be redirected to something that is similar but OK. Carry the child or lead the child by the hand, saying
4. For every no, offer two acceptable choices.
5. If children have enough language, help them express their feelings, including anger, and their wishes. Help them think about alternatives and solutions to problems. Adults should never fear children's anger.

6. Try saying "*You need to...*" instead of just telling the child what to do.
7. Avoid talking about children in their presence or saying things you don't want repeated.
8. Put suggestions in the form of questions: "*What would happen if you put the blocks together this way?*"