

GUIDES TO SPEECH AND ACTION

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GUIDES IN SPEECH

1. State suggestions or directions in a positive rather than a negative form.

A positive suggestion is one which tells a child what to do instead of pointing out what he is not to do. A positive direction is less likely to rouse resistance. It makes help seem constructive rather than limiting. When we make suggestions in a positive way, we are giving the child a good social tool to use. To put directions positively represents a step in developing a more positive attitude toward children's behavior inside ourselves.

2. Give the child a choice only when you intend to leave the situation up to the child.

Choices are legitimate. With increasing maturity one makes an increasing number of choices. But there are decisions which a child is not ready to make because of his limited capacities and experience. We must avoid offering the child a choice when we are not really willing to let him decide the questions. It is confusing to the child to be asked a questions when what is wanted is not information but only confirmation. Be sure your questions are legitimate ones.

3. Your voice is a teaching tool. Use words and tone of voice which will help the child to feel confident and reassured.

A quiet, firm manner of speaking conveys confidence. It may be necessary to speak firmly, but it is never necessary to raise one's voice. The most effective speech is simple, direct, and slow. It is always better to move nearer the person to whom you are speaking, rather than to call or shout across any play area. Your words will get a better reception if they are spoken quietly, face to face.

4. Avoid trying to change behavior by methods which may lead to loss of self-respect such as shaming a child or labeling behavior "naughty," "selfish".

Neither children nor adults are likely to develop desirable behavior patterns as the result of fear, shame, or guilt. In learning constructive ways of guiding behavior, our first step is to eliminate destructive patterns: Gestures, expressions, and tones of voice words which pass judgment. A child will be helped if we accept her as she is and try to make it possible for her to find some success, rather than if we reprove her because she does not meet our standards.

5. Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another or by encouraging competition.

Children who are encouraged to be competitive are very likely to quarrel more with one another. In competition someone always loses and is likely to feel hurt and resentful. Competition does not build friendly and social feelings. It also creates problems within the child. Neither constant success nor too many failures prepare a child for what he will meet later in a competitive world. Avoid competitive kinds of motivation until children have developed ego strength and can balance failures with success.

6. Redirect the child by suggesting an activity that is related to her own purposes or interests whenever possible.

We will be more successful in changing the child's behavior if we attempt to turn the child's attention to an act which has equal value for her. Suggestions for acting differently will take into account the different meanings in behaviors - For example: Throwing (balls instead of sand), vigorous play (raking leaves instead of running wildly). Redirection should help the child face her problem by showing how it can be met, not by diverting her.

7. The effectiveness of a suggestion or a direction may depend largely in its timing.

The timing of a suggestion may be as important as the suggestion itself. Advice given too soon deprives the child of a chance to try to work things out for himself. A suggestion made too late may have lost any chance of being successful. Through experience one can increase one's skill in giving a suggestion at the moment when it will do the most good.

GUIDES IN ACTION

8. Avoid making models in any art medium for the children to copy.

Art is valuable because it is a means of self-expression. The young child needs avenues of expression. Her speech is limited. Her feelings are strong. If she has models for her, she will be less likely to be creative and more likely to be limited in trying to copy. Art then becomes only another area where she strives to imitate the adult who can do things much better.

9. Give the child the minimum of help in order that he may have the maximum chance to grow in independence, but give help when the child needs it.

Children's self-confidence is increased by independent solving of problems. There are all kinds of ways to help a child help himself rather than stepping in and doing it for him. In leaving the child free to satisfy his strong growth impulse to be independent, we support his feeling of confidence in himself: "I can do this all by myself." To let the child do things for himself does not mean denying his requests for help. When a child asks for help, we listen to his request and answer it in a way that will make him less helpless and dependent. Confidence in self is based on a foundation of trust in others.

10. Make your directions effective by reinforcing them when necessary.

A verbal suggestion, even though given positively, may not be enough in itself. A glance at the right moment, moving nearer a child, a verbal suggestion, actual physical help are all techniques. One common fault of parents and teachers is using too many words. Have confidence in the child's ability to hear and respond. But add different techniques together until successful rather than depend solely on words.

11. Forestalling is the most effective way of handling problems. Learn to foresee and prevent rather than mop-up after a difficulty.

Learning to prevent problems is important because, in many cases, children do not profit from making mistakes, or the consequences would be too serious, or the child may interpret consequences incorrectly. Effective guidance depends on knowing how to forestall and prevent trouble as much as on knowing what to do when trouble occurs.

12. When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained.

In a well-planned environment there will not be many "no's" but these "no's" will be clearly defined, and the child will understand them. The adult must be the one who is responsible for limiting children so that they do not come to harm or do not harm others or destroy property. Children will feel more secure with adults who can take this responsibility.

13. Be alert to the total situation. Use the most strategic positions for supervising.

Observation of the total situation is essential to effective guidance: For children's safety, for helping children, and for enrichment of experience. Trouble is seldom avoided by a suggestion given at a distance.

14. The health and safety of the children are a primary concern at all times.

The skillful teacher never relaxes watchfulness for things which affect the health and safety of the children.

15. Observe and take notes; increase your own awareness of what goes on.

Underlying all these guides is the assumption that teaching is based on the ability to observe behavior objectively and to evaluate its meaning. Skill in observing and recording is essential in building understanding.