

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk

A guide based on the book from Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Part I: Helping Children Deal With Their Feelings

- Many times when campers tell us how they're feeling, we write it off as them complaining or them being wrong.
 - "Of course you want to go to the pool! All your friends are there!"
 - "No one else is hot."
 - This discredits their feelings and can upset them, hurt their self esteem, or lead to an argument.
 - Activity 1: Read the scenarios and come up with a typical denial response to what the camper is saying.
 - Anyone want to share?
- Most of the time campers have the ability to work through their own emotions, but when we respond quickly, we get in the way.
 - We may think we're helping by offering advice, asking questions, defending the other person, or pitying them, but those often make the situation worse.
- To help with feelings:
 - Listen with full attention.
 - Sometimes we get busy, but we need to stop what we're doing and listen.
 - Acknowledge their feelings with a word (such as "Oh," "Mmmm," or "I see").
 - Give their feeling a name.
 - Let's get in groups and try this activity.
 - Anyone want to share?
 - Give them their wishes in a fantasy.
 - "I wish we had time to do the ropes course again." "I wish we could do ropes course every day." "I wish I had a ropes course at home." "I wish every school and park had a ropes course."
- Partner Activity
 - With a partner, read what the camper says and choose a describing word. Then use that word in a statement to show understanding.

- Anyone care to share?
- Role Play
 - Pair up.
 - How did the denial make you feel?
 - How did it feel when the counselor listened?
- Additional Info

Part 2: Engaging Cooperation

- Getting campers to cooperate can be difficult. Campers sometime see counselors as enemies who are always telling them what to do. We try to fix this in a variety of ways, like accusing, comparisons, sarcasm, and more, but those things generally don't work.
 - Activity 1: Read these statements and write down how they make you feel.
 - Anyone want to share?
- To engage cooperation,
 - Describe what you see or describe the problem.
 - Ex. "The light's on in the bathroom."
 - Give information.
 - Ex. "Wet swimsuits on the bed make your sheets cold and wet."
 - Say it with a word.
 - Ex. "Shoes."
 - Talk about your feelings.
 - Ex. "I don't like when so many people are on my bed."
 - Write a note.
 - Ex. "Nighty night, don't let the bedbugs bite! But before you lay down, have you made your teeth white?"
- Activity
 - Get in groups.
 - Go through the scenario and use all five ways to engage cooperation.
 - Anyone want to share?
 - Grab a partner and complete the following scenarios.
 - Anyone want to share?

- Additional Info
 - How you say it is just as important as what you say.

Part 3: Alternatives to Punishment

- Punishment is easy, not effective.
 - It's a distraction in the development process.
 - It gets in the way of campers facing their own misbehaviors.
 - What does punishment accomplish?
 - Are there other ways to do this?
- Remember, you can design situations that make it harder to do the right thing.
 - Partner up.
 - Come up with ways to keep all the campers involved and on task.
 - Anyone want to share?
- Alternatives to punishment:
 - Point out a way to be helpful.
 - Ex. "Why don't you start putting the helmets up for me? It would be very helpful."
 - Express strong disapproval (without attacking character).
 - Ex. "I don't like what's going on! It's disturbing to other campers when people are loud during rest period."
 - State your expectations.
 - Ex. "I expect everyone's bunk to be made in the morning."
 - Offer the camper a way to make amends.
 - Ex. "The broom is right here. Make sure to put it back after you've cleaned up."
 - Offer a choice.
 - Ex. "You can wear your tennis shoes or you can choose not to participate in the ropes course."
 - Take action (remove or restrain).
 - Ex. "Mitchell, why don't you come sit by me?"
 - Allow the camper to experience the natural consequences of misbehavior.

- Ex. "You're going to have to sit this activity out." (if not wearing tennis shoes)
 - Sometimes, these methods may be best replaced by problem solving.
- To problem solve:
 - Talk about the camper's feelings and needs.
 - Talk about your feelings and needs.
 - Brainstorm together to find a mutually agreeable solution.
 - Write down all ideas - without evaluating.
 - Decide which suggestions you like, which you don't, and which you plan to follow through on.
- Let's go through this problem-solving example together:
 - Every night after you turn the light off, your campers continue to talk and use their flashlights.
 - Step 1: Have a group meeting and tell the campers you understand they're not ready to power down when you turn the lights off and that they get restless.
 - Step 2: Explain that you get upset when you have to nag them to be quiet and that you need them to be quiet so they can start powering down and begin to sleep.
 - Step 3 and 4: Let us talk all night, let us talk longer, don't nag, do 10 minutes of flashlight time, let us have buddy time, be quiet when the lights go off
 - Step 5: "I can't let you talk all night or I'll be in trouble, so we've got to get rid of that one," "We don't want to be quiet right when the lights go off, so let's get rid of that."
 - Come to a solution: "Okay, so from now on we'll do 10 minutes of flashlight time and we can whisper during it."
 - Stick with it!
 - Group Activity
 - Work through the scenario.
 - Anyone want to share?
 - Make sure you remember that the child isn't the problem. It's the behavior. Act that way.

Part 4: Encouraging Autonomy

- It may take a little more time and effort, but we need to push campers to be themselves and do things for themselves.
 - A great example of this is when campers have disagreements. It's a lot quicker and easier to get in the middle of it, but if they work through it themselves, it'll create skills for the rest of their lives.
- When one person is continually dependent on another, certain feelings occur. Often, they're not positive
 - Partner Activity - partner up and write down how these scenarios would make you feel.
 - Anyone want to share?
- To encourage autonomy:
 - Let children make choices.
 - Ex. "Would you like to wear your rain jacket or run through the rain?"
 - Show respect for a child's struggle.
 - Ex. "It can be hard to hit the target. Try keeping your elbow up."
 - Don't ask too many questions.
 - Ex. Instead of "How was your day? What did you do? What was your favorite activity?" say "I'm so glad to see you guys!"
 - This doesn't mean NEVER ask questions. Just feel out the right time.
 - Don't rush to answer questions.
 - Ex. "That's an interesting question. What do you think?"
 - Encourage children to use outside resources.
 - Ex. "I'm not sure why we do it that way. How would you feel about asking Allison?"
 - Don't take away hope.
 - Ex. Instead of "Well, the climbing wall is really difficult to get to the top of," say "You think you'll get to the top?"
 - Group activity
 - Revise these statements to encourage autonomy.
 - Anyone care to share?
 - Did anyone use different methods?

- Please stay in your groups, as we're about to do another activity.
- In addition to the skills we learned to encourage autonomy, you can also recall the other skills we've learned
 - Group activity - Read through the scenarios and identify language that would encourage dependence and language that would encourage autonomy.
 - Anyone care to share?
- Additional Information
 - Mini Activity: I'm going to throw out some scenarios. Try to find a way to say "yes."
 - Can I have a snack?
 - Can I go talk to Kim?
 - Can we okay my game now?

Part 5: Praise

All the principles and skills discussed before can help a child see himself as a person of worth. Praise is another part of the answer, but it can be tricky.

To praise campers:

1. Describe what you see.
 - a. Instead of: "You cleaned your bunk! What a good girl you are!"
 - b. Try: "I see a lot of work has been going on here. The bed is made, and all the clothes are where they need to be.."
2. Describe what you feel.
 - a. " It's a pleasure to walk by this bunk"
3. Sum up the child's praiseworthy behavior with a word.
 - a. You lined up all your things underneath your bed! That's what I call *organization*."

Partner Activity

With a partner, read the following scenarios and write down a potential praise.

- Anyone want to share?

Additional Information:

- Words that evaluate (good, beautiful, fantastic) make children uncomfortable.
- Make sure your praise is appropriate to the camper's age and level of ability.
- Avoid praise that hints at weaknesses or past failures.
- Phrases such as "I knew all along you could do it" diminish the camper's sense of pride.

Part 6: Freeing Children from Playing Roles

When parents come to camp, they sometimes say things like "Watch out, he can be a little whiney." And sure enough, after we hear it, we look for them to be whiney. And kids do the same thing! When they hear, "Oh, ignore him, he's just extremely talkative," they see themselves as talkative, and they try to live up to that expectation.

To free campers from playing roles:

- Look for opportunities to show the child a new view of himself or herself.
 - Complainer: "I like the way you told me that. You made your point and didn't blame anyone."
- Put children in situations where they can see themselves differently
 - Greedy: "Please pass out snack so everyone can get some."
- Let campers overhear you say something positive about them
 - Whiner: "Karen had such a positive attitude at archery, even when things didn't go her way!"
- Model the positive behavior you'd like to see
 - "Hey, I thought I had you beat! It's not fun losing. I'd rather win. But oh well. I'll be a good sport about it."
- Be a storehouse for your camper's special moment
 - Rude: "You're not rude! Remember the other day when you held the door open for our whole cabin?"
- When your camper behaves according to the old label, state your feelings and/or expectations

- Sore loser: "I don't like your reaction. I know it's not fun to lose, but I expect you to be a good sport."

Partner Activity

- Anyone care to share?