

How To Talk So Kids Can Learn

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

How to deal with feelings that interfere with learning

- Instead of denying feelings (“This story is dumb.” “No it isn’t. It’s very interesting”), put the feelings into words (“This story is dumb.” “There’s something about the story you don’t like.”)
- Instead of criticism and advice, acknowledge feelings with a word or sound (oh, mmm, uh, I see)

- Instead of ignoring feelings, accept feelings even as you stop unacceptable behaviour
- When a person is drowning, it's not the time to give swimming lessons
- Instead of criticism, questions and advice, accept and reflect feelings and wishes

- A response that conveys full understanding - without reservation - gives young people the courage to begin to deal with their problems

7 skills that invite kids to cooperate

- Instead of accusations / sarcasm / orders, describe the problem
- Instead of accusations / blame / putdowns, give information
- Instead of an order / discouraging prophecy / threat, offer a choice
- Instead of a warning / lecture / accusation, say it with a word or gesture (eg Instead of: “Where are you going without your jacket etc?” Simply: “Your jacket”.)

- Instead of sarcasm / shaming / name-calling, talk about your feelings
- Put it in writing
- Instead of scolding , try using another voice or character (eg a robot)

- Prep child who was always late; Mum made a list of things to do, and drew a picture beside each one
- “Punishment can control misbehaviour, but by itself it will not teach desirable behaviour or even reduce the desire to misbehave. (Albert Bandera)

Alternatives to punishment.

Instead of threatening punishment, you could:

- 1. Point out a way to be helpful
- 2. Express your strong disapproval (without attacking character)
- 3. State your expectations
- 4. Show the child how to make amends
- 5. Offer a choice
- 6. Let the child experience the consequences of his behaviour

- Strange as it may seem, studies show that both rewards and punishment, in the long run, actually reduce the desire to learn.
- Don't even try to problem-solve if you're feeling rushed or agitated
- The first step - hearing the children out - is the most important
- Students are not willing to work on finding solutions until their feelings have been acknowledged

- Our role as educators is not to supply “right” answers but to help children arrive at answers through their own thinking process.

Describe rather than praise

- Step 1. The adult describes what the child has done
- Step 2. The child, after hearing the accomplishment described, praises himself

- The most valuable kind of learning takes place when children are deeply involved in what they're doing, not when they're worried about how others will judge them.
- Not: "A perfect report card"
- Use: " These 'A's represent determination and hours of hard work. You must be proud of yourself."

Students who have had a disagreement

- 1. Ask them each to write out a full report on what happened
- 2. Include recommendations for the future
- 3. Read their reports, acknowledge them
- 4. Ask them to share their recommendations with each other, and to come to an agreement (if possible)

Problem-solving with a class

- 1. Listen to the students' feelings and needs
- 2. Summarize their point of view
- 3. Express your own feelings and needs
- 4. Invite the class to brainstorm with you to find a solution
- 5. Write down all ideas - without evaluating
- 6. Together, decide which plans to use, and how to implement them