
POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES

to negative phrases to improve listening

Parenting from the Heart

Negative phrasing is harder to process

Research shows that negative language is ineffective because it:

- requires double processing - the child must listen to what he shouldn't be doing and deduce what he should be doing.
- in general, prompts the fight, flight, freeze, or faint response. In this state, children are more likely to respond with anger, avoidance, rigidity, or helplessness.

Positive language is more effective

Positive language is more likely to activate the child's prefrontal cortex responsible for problem-solving, emotional regulation, open-mindedness and resilience.

It also models problem-solving, calmness, and reflection because the parent has to pause, think and then respond.



Negative vs. Positive Language

- Don't run → Walk, please.
- Stop touching your sister → Hands to yourself.
- Don't throw toys → Keep your toys on the ground.
- Stop interrupting → I can see you want to talk to me.

Wait one moment, please.

- Leave him alone → Come over here and play.
- Don't hit → Only gentle touches, please.
- Stop yelling → Quiet voice, please.
- You don't need another toy. I'm not buying that. → If that's something you really want, why not save up for it?
- This is nothing to get upset about → I can see this is hard right now. Let's work together.
- I can't play right now → Yes, I can play with you after I'm done writing this email.