



# Positive and Wholly Creative Communication

## 70 Examples of Guidance Language



By Darleen Claire Wodzinski, MS ESE, MA CMHC, PhD

Psychoneuroeducational Institute, LLC &

Orchard Human Services, Inc.





# Positive and Wholly Creative Communication

## 70 Examples of Guidance Language

*Part of the Development-MEANT Series*



Guidance language uses a communication style that shares helpful information to guide children in the proper direction, thinking, or behavior. Instead of telling a child what to not do, guidance language practically guides the child in the ways of doing what is requested. An example would be to tell a child “please walk” or “this is a walking place” instead of saying “stop running.” The focus on running would maintain the child’s focus on doing what the adult does not want – running. Using the guidance approach, the focus is on the desired outcome – which, in this case, is promoting the child’s safety by walking. This thin book presents 70 phrases to launch any adult – whether a parent, educator, peace officer, caregiver, or helping professional – on a successful journey toward using Wholly Creative Communication.



## How We Speak Matters

The way we speak to children is almost as important as how we physical care for and nurture them. Adults instinctively know to hold a tiny baby with tender hands; yet the same adult may not realize that aggressive and negative communication can instigate serious behavioral, developmental, and emotional problems for young children. The mainstream culture in America tends to favor negative communications as a way of connecting with others: *Thank God it's Friday ... yup, my boss is a pain.* Meanwhile, parents and teachers complain about difficult children, their spouses or partners, parents, employers, and even the government. These types of complaints are part of the fabric of today's culture.

Yet, children pick up the negative emotions of these communications. Infants just 9 months of age show signs of anxiety when hearing two adults argue – in another language that the child does not understand. Babies have super powers that allow them to *read* the emotions and mood of others. And this is what creates the problem with aggressive communication styles.

How many times do adults say things like *you'll break your neck ... you'll put your eye out ... you could get killed ... you'll fall and crack your skull open.* The list of negative statements shouted at children in the spirit of promoting safety is endless. Yet, children tend to do better with warnings like, "Please walk and play safely. I want you to have fun." Children have a much easier time responding to positive and focused statements like this – that state what is expected of the child ... *play safely, walk, have fun.* And the results with children are incredible. Children taught through positive wholly creative communication are more responsive and responsible.



## **Finding a Better Way to Communicate**

Knowing how to use a wholly creative guidance approach to share critical information with children is an important step toward promoting positive child outcomes. Following is a list of possible guidance language-oriented ways to instruct children in the ways to behave, communicate with others, work out conflicts, and maintain safety.

When parents, caretakers, educators, and helping professionals learn to use positive communication with children, behavior tends to improve. Then when the positive communication is paired with reinforcement, a magical thing happens in the child's brain: A specialized network of brain cells develops to support the child's abilities to self-soothe, self-calm, self-regulate, and follow instructions. Then children become more stable, compliant, and proud – proud that they are able to follow the rules and use their creativity to have fun within the system. Adults to master this process tend to have much better outcomes with children. These are the parents, teachers, counselors, principals, grandparents, and paraprofessionals who are able to calm just about any child and any classroom.



## 70 Positive and Wholly Creative Communications

So here is a list of 70 ways to use Wholly Creative Communication to help your child, student, and client become a good friend, good classmate, and good citizen:

1. [If a child hurts another child, teach them to respond this way...] Friend, are you alright? Do you need anything? [Then the child can apologize] I'm sorry. [or] I apologize.
2. [Instead of allowing a child to complain about food, recommend and allow the child to say this] I don't care for that.
3. [Instead of saying no to a child's heartfelt request] Yes we can, just not right now; we can make plans to do it.
4. [When asking a child to use manners, say this.] Please say please and thank you? [or] Please use manners and be polite.
5. Bottoms in the seat.
6. Close your eyes, be quiet, and think of something wonderful. Imagine how it would feel? How would it look? How would it smell? How would you feel inside?
7. Cross the street when you are holding an adult's hand, you have the adult's permission, and you have looked both ways to make sure the path/road is clear.
8. Did you do exactly what you were asked to do? [if yes ... ] Thank you for doing exactly what you were asked to do. [if no ... ] What has to happen for you to do exactly what you were asked to do?
9. Face space is the place between two people's faces where respect grows.
10. Feet on the floor.
11. Hands off. [instead of saying "don't touch that"]



12. How can a child get help if a friend [is hurt/is sad/is scared/is acting rude/is acting mean/is misbehaving]?
13. How can you get help if you are [hurt/sad/scared/acting rude/acting mean/misbehaving]?
14. How do we speak to friends? How do I speak to you? Do you want me to speak [rudely/harshly/meanly/angrily] to you?
15. How do you think you can [work this out/get this done/figure it out/find help/ask for help/make things better]?
16. I am going to count backwards from five; when I am done, you will {be quiet/sit in your chair/be seated on the ground/line up/stand quietly in line/clear your space at the table}.
17. I feel sad about your [hurting a friend/hot sharing/being rude/speaking angrily/making a mess/not following instructions].
18. I like that idea; we can try it another day, but for today we are going to [fill in the blank].
19. I like the way you [fill in the blank].
20. I wonder if there is a better way to do this? Can you think of a better way?
21. I wonder ... how you can ...
22. If you have trouble being quiet and sitting still, you can put your fingers together and roll your thumbs around each other - it is called twiddling.
23. Leave a cloud of space around you when you play with other children.
24. May I be excused, please?
25. Nice job [fill in the blank with anything positive that the child does or says].
26. Perhaps you can take turns. I wonder, could that work? Do you know how to take turns? Can you use your voice to take turns?



27. Please be gentle with [others/friends/teachers/your family/me].
28. Please be [polite/kind/nice/a friend/respectful] to me.
29. Please chew with your mouth closed; and swallow your food before you speak. Thank you for using polite table manners.
30. Please clear your space after you are finished eating.
31. Please finish eating; you can [have dessert/get seconds/clear your space/go play] after you have finished your meal.
32. Please give me face space; I will give you face space, too.
33. Please stay in line and follow me with marching feet.
34. Please stay in your seat; close your mouth and be quiet; and wait for me to tell what comes next.
35. Please use gentle hands and kind words.
36. Please use manners when you are sitting at the meal table. Please say please and thank you if you want something passed to you. Thank you for using good manners.
37. Please use your words to work this out; or I will take it away [referring to the thing that the children are fighting over].
38. Real winners have fun playing the game.
39. Stay with your teacher at all times.
40. Take a deep breath, hold it in, calm your body, be still, slowly let it out through your mouth. Close your eyes and do it again.
41. Thank you for saying please and thank you. [or] Thank you for using great manners.



42. Thank you for sharing that awesome idea; let's do that one day, and for today we are going to [fill in the blank].
43. There will always be someone who wins and someone who loses when you play a game, but real winners have fun just playing the game.
44. This is a walking place.
45. This is a quiet place; please use a [softer/quieter/more polite] voice.
46. Use hands to touch people with love, respect, and kindness.
47. Walking feet sound slow.
48. Well done, friend. I feel proud of you. I wonder, do you feel proud of yourself? Where do you feel proud? In your head? Your heart? Your tummy? Somewhere else?
49. We are going to [explain impending transition to a new activity/place/location] in [state amount of time ... like 5 minutes]. I will clap my hands in [amount of time] to let you know it is time to go.
50. We can work things out with others by being polite, being kind, being respectful, taking turns, sharing, and being a good friend.
51. We treat other people the way we like to be treated. Do you like when I am kind and respectful to you? Would you like it if I [hit you/yelled at you/made fun of you/bullied you/took things from you/would not share with you]?
52. What do we already know ... that will help us here? In this situation?
53. What do you know about this situation? Have you ever been in a situation like this before? Have you done this same thing in the past? If so, how did you do it? How can you do that same good stuff again? How can you make this work?





54. When the twiddle is on, the mouth is off. {Twiddle fingers to five a sensory and motor experience that helps the child self-regulate, remain quiet, and self-calm. Over time, the child will be able to automatically self-calm by just twiddling!!!}
55. When you make good choices, you get good consequences; when you make bad choices, you get bad consequences. It is up to you to choose how it goes.
56. I wonder ... how can you use your voice and words to work this out?
57. Wow! I really like how you [fill in the blank].
58. Wow! I really like that you [fill in the blank].
59. Yes, you may play with toys after you have [picked up/finished eating/ cleared your place at the table/worked it out with your friend/done your work/calmed yourself/gotten quiet and still].
60. You can share, take turns, wait your turn, allow a friend to have a turn.
61. You can work it out with your friend, or I will take [the toy/game/treat/balloon] away.
62. You do not have my permission to [fill in the blank]; please stop doing [blank] and do [this] instead.
63. You don't have to [like/want] to [fill in the blank], you just have to do it. {Example - sharing, eating veggies, washing hands, taking nap, doing homework }
64. You may [fill in the blank] after you have finished [cleaning up/doing your homework/your assignment/putting on your jacket, hat and gloves/putting your toys away/working it out with your friend].
65. You may stay on the playground with the other children if you [come down the slide feet first/ take turns on the swings/play gently with friends/follow instructions].



66. You will be able to choose an awesome [activity/snack/book/show/movie/game/art and craft activity] after you are done [cleaning up/washing your hands/ putting away your things/following instructions].
67. Your hands and feet are part of your body; please keep your hands and feet close to your body.
68. Your voice sounds loud; please turn down your volume and speak more quietly/softly.
69. I love when you are so [dependable/truthful/kind/loving/sharing/caring/honest/responsible].
70. I feel so proud about what you did; it feels happy right here in my [heart/tummy/head]. I wonder if you feel really proud? Do you feel a warm or tingly feeling in your heart, tummy, or head? Because you really should be proud of what you have done.





Other books, white papers, and publications available through Orchard Human Services, Inc. and Psychoneuroeducational Institute, LLC:



- Marmalade Jam Series –
  - Marmalade Jam
  - Juno’s Butter Knife
  - Marmalade Jam Companion Coloring Book
- Developmental Justice
- What Children Need to Know
- Develop-MEANT Series
- Methylene Tetrahydrofolate Reductase Deficiency: Practical Implications for Pediatric Medical and Dental Practice
- Autism Insights – A New Hope *series*

### [Marmalade Jam](#)

Part I of Therapeutic Children’s Series

Juno’s Butter Knife [to be released soon]

Part II of Therapeutic Children’s Series

### [Dead Children Can’t Read](#)

Classrooms of Compassion

### [Raising Social Children](#)

A Guide for Parents Who Suspect Their Child May Have A Delay in Social Development

### [Self-Harm Guide](#)

A Guide for Youth, Families, Educators, Human Services Workers