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# TALKING HONESTLY

*It appears then that genuine friendship cannot exist where one of the parties is unwilling to tell the truth and the other is equally indisposed to hear it.*

—Cicero

**W**hat is most needed for our students to communicate effectively with others? Honesty. Simple to understand but not always easy to do. Speaking honestly requires a lot of work because when committing ourselves to talking honestly with one another, we set out on a rather difficult path. We *first* have to be honest with ourselves and *then* we have to be honest when communicating with others.

**I**t takes plenty of courage to be honest with one another. Many times, in order to maintain somewhat shallow relationships, people focus on being polite and cordial, rather than being honest and straightforward. Politeness and courtesy are admirable qualities, but honesty from true friends is what is valued most of all.

**E**ffective communicators are also consistent in words and action. We know that there are two basic causes for many misunderstandings. The first is not saying what we mean. The second is not doing what we say. When our students learn to say what they mean and do what they say, they become trustworthy communicators. The lack of alignment between word and action always results in a loss of power and effectiveness.

**I**f our students are to become effective communicators, they must be motivated to ask themselves if it is more important to conform to what other people believe, or to discover what is true by acting on the desire and intent to see things as they really are. We must support a child's natural tendency to search for the truth.

**L**astly, as teachers, we must show our students the virtue of talking honestly ourselves. When we do, our students will recognize the importance of keeping trust when they joyously exclaim, "You kept your promise!"



# TALKING HONESTLY THEME OBJECTIVES

## 1. DEVELOP HONEST RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Be honest with your students. Let them know how you are feeling. When appropriate, share your feelings with your students. Tell the truth, openly and honestly. Listen to your students and really hear what they have to say. If your students are going to communicate effectively in your classroom, they must first trust you. The two most important components of a trusting relationship are honesty and openness. In a classroom where honesty is foremost, a student knows what to expect; there are no inconsistencies or surprises. Develop a trusting relationship with your students.



## 2. NURTURE CARING AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Everybody wants to be cared for. But what does it mean to care? How does one act when truly caring for another? Do we help one another right into a state of dependency? Or do we really want to enable others to become all that they can—autonomous, responsible and respectful?



## 3. MODEL EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

It's been called modeling, observational learning, imitation, social learning and vicarious learning. If you want your students to develop good communication skills, you must show them the way. Ultimately, how you do that best is by living it. Be a good, honest, trusting and effective communicator!



## 4. SET REASONABLE CLASSROOM "AGREEMENTS"

Involve your students in the democratic process by defining which rules or "agreements" are to be kept by the class. By doing so you will help them to improve their negotiation and communication skills and also give them the message that you respect their thoughts and require them to be responsible for their actions. Jean Piaget wrote, "Rules imposed by external constraint remain external to the child's spirit. Rules due to mutual respect and cooperation take root inside the child's mind." Get your students communicating about what rules they want to live by in your classroom.

# POSITIVELY POWERFUL

**GOAL:** Students will listen to their inhibiting thoughts and change them into positively powerful statements.

**TIME:** 20 minutes

**SETTING:** classroom

**MATERIALS:** “Positively Powerful” worksheet, pencil

**PROCEDURE:**

Your students have undoubtedly heard you say, “Now listen carefully!” a countless number of times. But how often have you asked students to listen to themselves? Your students can teach themselves about their self-concepts by listening to what they have to say—about themselves.

**F**irst, distribute the “Positively Powerful” worksheet. Ask your students to focus their attention to the top half of the sheet. Within a few minutes, your students should have a long list of examples under the “I have to . . .” side such as “come to school,” “listen to my parents” and “do my homework” and an equally long list under the “I can’t . . .” side such as “can’t draw,” “can’t spell” and “can’t do math.”



**O**nce your students have finished, instruct them to rewrite each of their negative “have to” and “can’t” statements into “choose to” and “don’t want to (badly enough)” statements. Several of your students may protest loudly! “Hey, teach”; retorts one, “I have to go to school; my mom makes me!” Challenge their thinking by asking, “Does your mom carry you to school each day?” “Does your mom physically force you to come?” As kids shake their heads “no,” point out that they do choose to come to school each day. If they choose not to come, they would also be choosing to suffer the consequences! Likewise, a student may say, “But I can’t get an A in spelling!” You can reply, “There’s no way in the whole world that you could get an A?” The student may think for a minute and respond, “Well, maybe if I studied for hours every night and had someone help me and read a lot more.” At which point you can say, “Ah-ha! So you can get an A if you want to badly enough!”

**G**ive your students a few minutes to reread the second part of their worksheets with their positive and powerful new thoughts. Then discuss how their old self-concepts were negative. By saying “I have to” or “I can’t,” your students were inhibiting themselves and refusing to take responsibility for their actions. With a little listening and a slight change of mind, your students will learn to be honest enough to admit that they have power over their own thoughts and actions.