

insights

Giving kids scripts for social and school success

by Michael Grose



Recently, I heard my adult daughter rebuke a male friend for telling her that she'd lost weight.

"You just can't say that," remarked my daughter.

Realising his mistake this young man said, "So what should say instead?"

"Tell me I look healthy."

"Hey, you look really healthy!"

"That's better," remarked my daughter, who's not backward in coming forwards.

This young man's scripting was askew. He knew that a male complimenting a female on losing weight maybe no compliment at all, however he didn't know what else to say. My daughter gave him a new script that he can use in similar situations in the future.

This scenario is relevant to parenting. Parents should always looking for opportunities to give their kids the social scripts to express themselves in different situations.

Benefits of providing kids with social scripts

Social scripting wins the parenting trifecta. Giving kids the words to use helps them stay safe; become social and importantly, promotes their independence. Your job as a parent is to wean kids off you. Social scripting is a big part of this process.

So if keeping kids safe, while socialising and developing their independence is important then look for ways to give kids the right words to use. Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. Asking a teacher for help or assistance

Kids often coerces parents to do their bidding with teachers, coaches, siblings and other adults. It's easy to pick up the phone and arrange to meet a teacher or go into your child's room and ask for something on behalf of your child. Take a different approach. "Choose a time when your teacher is free, and then ask her if you can sit at the front of the classroom. You could say...."

2. Entering a game at school

Many kids struggle to enter into a game or activity at school, so they sit on the sidelines and miss out. Consider

coaching a child about how he or she may approach a situation. Suggest that he or she looks for someone they know, and wait for a lull in the game before asking. Social scripting involves timing, not just the words to use.

3. Telling a sibling to stop annoying them

“Jessica, please stop flicking the ruler while I’m watching TV. I find it annoying.” This may work. If not, this child could try, “Jessica, could you flick your rule elsewhere.” It may work. It may not. But it’s infinitely better than yelling, “Jessica, DDDOOOONNNN’TTTT!!!!”

4. Saying No to a friend without losing face

Research shows that many teenagers struggle with peer pressure because they don’t know how to say NO in a way that maintains their status. One strategy is to use an excuse rather than say give an outright NO. “I don’t want to drink tonight because I’ve got football training in the morning.”

5. Expressing their emotions

Both genders can struggle to express their feelings, particularly if they haven’t been taught the words to use at home. Recently, I saw a mother prompt her three year old when he was clearly annoyed.

“Are you frustrated Maxie?”

“Yes, I fusttated!!”

“Would you like a hug?”

“Yessss!”

You’re never too young or too old to be hugged. Just as you’re never too young or too old to receive a social script from a well-meaning parent or friend.



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