Last week's newsletter contained suggestions on using more appropriate words with children when emotions are running high. Some famous person once said, “It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it.” It may be possible that philosophy applies to the “littles” as well as us adults. As we know, the “littles” react (and copy) what they see each and every day. On good days most parents/caregivers try to “model” good behavior, and say the right thing – even when pushed to that point they often regret.

In the mental health world, saying the right thing (even on the not so good days) is called “reframing.” Reframe your thoughts by saying, “This is NOT up to me.” For example: expectations, judgments and opinions from people who are NOT me. Likewise, HOW I chose to react to anything that IS up to me.

Cognitive reframing is a technique used to shift your mindset so you are able to look at a situation, person or relationship from a different perspective. The essential idea behind reframing is that the frame through which a person views a situation determines their point of view. Last, but not least this leads into the ability to problem solve – which leads into good decision making and choices.

Now how does this “reframing thing” work for our littles? Oh, by the way this technique works great with teenagers – you know those “terrible two” X 7 or 8. So, let’s look at some examples: (And yes, your 15 or 16-year old may need re-directed by reframing as much as that two-year old.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE WORDS</th>
<th>REFRAMING WITH POSITIVE WORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO hitting!</td>
<td>“Friends don’t know what you want when you hit them. What can you say to Suzy so that she knows you want a turn?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO running!</td>
<td>“Show me how you can walk instead of running. I know you have lots of energy, but you might hurt yourself or someone when you run.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOP THAT!</td>
<td>“Let’s take minute &amp; pause…(maybe take deep breaths.) Take the time to connect &amp; YES this takes time, but in the long run you may know what caused the behaviors.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO shouting!</td>
<td>“Some of your friend want quiet time. Let’s whisper (you need to whisper too)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t touch that!</td>
<td>“This (hold the object) is very breakable. We can look at it but not touch with our hands”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So stay tuned for more lessons on the importance of being able to problem solve and learn to reframe. All of this is connected to regulating functions that override the impulses of the brain stem (fight or flee impulses), and the limbic system. Then we go full circle to the fact that parts of the brain that requires “relaxed alertness fostered by positive emotions” requires us to use “words to love by.”

Sources
Conscious Discipline.com
https://www.verywellmind.com
Chin R. Reyes (2020)
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