

## TEACHER & CHILD INTERACTION

an excerpt from Teacher & Child by Haim Ginott

The way you talk to children tells children how you feel about them. Tactless, snarky comments defeat a child. They do not improve his behavior. Your statements affect his self-esteem and self-worth. To a large extent, your language determines his destiny.

Eradicate blaming, shaming, preaching, moralizing, ordering, bossing, admonishing, accusing, ridiculing and belittling from your dealings with children. Address the child's situation, not his character or personality. For example: A child spilled paint. Miss Teacher said to the child, "Oops, the paint is spilled. We need paper towels." Miss Snarky said, "(Groan!) Go sit over there while I clean this up. You need to be more careful and watch what you are doing."

Children will often irritate you, annoy you, and even make you angry.

The reality of teaching – lots of children, endless demands, sudden crises – make anger inevitable. You are not a saint, an angel or a martyr and you are not expected to be. But, like the children in your classroom, you are expected to express displeasure in acceptable ways without doing damage. Unfortunately, the native tongue of anger is insults. That is unacceptable. This is what you can do when you are angry. Describe what you saw and what you feel. Use "I" messages. "I see our new dolls in the home center without their clothes. I am annoyed. The dolls need their clothes on." Or "I see books on the floor. I am irritated. Books get torn up when they are on the floor." Or "You threw a rock. I am angry. Rocks are not for throwing. Rocks hurt people and people are not for hurting."

Inviting Cooperation: An enlightened teacher does not look at children as his natural friends. Children are dependent on their teachers and dependency breeds hostility. (Remember how you treated your parents when you were a teenager? "Give me money, take me to the mall, shut up and leave me alone!") To reduce hostility, a teacher deliberately provides children with opportunities to experience independence. The more autonomy, the less enmity; the more self-dependence, the less resentment of others. Helper charts with jobs assigned to children are a great way to empower young children. A reliable strategy that invites cooperation when children are misbehaving is to give real choices. For example: It started to snow. The children ran to the window and started to scream and yell and fight over who would be closest to the window. The teacher said, "You can watch the snow quietly and be nice to each other, or you can go back to your seats and we'll close the blinds." The noise and shoving stopped instantly. The children watched the snow in delightful calm.

The essence of discipline is finding effective alternatives to punishment. Good discipline is a series of little victories in which a teacher, through small decencies, reaches a child's heart. Kindness can only be taught kindly. Tolerance can only be taught tolerantly. Friendliness can only be taught in a friendly manner. Non-violence can only be taught non-violently. Misbehavior and punishment usually breed and reinforce each other.

Carlo was running around the room annoying other children. The teacher said, "Carlo, you need to make a decision, to stay with us or leave the group." Carlo said, "I want to stay," and began behaving appropriately. But a few minutes later, he was misbehaving again. The teacher said, "Carlo, I see you have made your decision to leave the group." Carlo protested, but the teacher did not argue with him or give him an opportunity to debate with her. She simply escorted him to sit in the back of the room away from the group.

Most teachers have the right attitudes and concern for children. All you need is a style of communication that demonstrates this concern. Every teacher can develop an aversion to words that humiliate, acts that embarrass, and gestures that degrade. You can voice your displeasure factually, vividly, and harmlessly. Indignation – yes! Indignity – no! A simple trick: Get their attention with new words. For example: "livid" "All the manipulatives are mixed together. They are not in their own baskets. I am livid. This is not fun to play with." Believe me, the children will freeze attentively, then scatter and start sorting those toys!

A classic in its field, Teacher and Child by Haim Ginott shows parents and teachers how to communicate with children by unlearning the language of rejection, and learning a new language of acceptance while still providing the firm, fair structure children require.

