

Positive Guidance for Montessori Beginnings

Positive Guidance or positive discipline is an approach to parenting or teaching young children that I have found invaluable. I hope you find these tools helpful as well.

Topic One: Ground Rules

When we use positive guidance, it is not necessary to respond to a child's misbehavior with the word, "No". Instead we can state the rule we see being challenged, and then describe the behavior we would like to see.

When our Montessori Beginnings community meets there will be times when we need to set limits with the children. I think it is less confusing for the children if they are receiving consistent messages from all of the adults and therefore recommend that we use the following positive guidance approach. My husband and I have found it helpful to have these three basic rules because they give us room to interpret them to fit our own parenting styles.

The rules: **Be Safe:** watch your child and ask yourself, "Is this behavior that might be harmful to him?" If the answer is yes, tell your child, "Be Safe!" and then tell him what you want him to do. You might say, "Be Safe! Use walking feet inside."

Be Kind: watch your child and ask yourself, "Is this behavior that might be harmful to another child?" (Sometimes when they have chosen to hit or push the answer is an obvious yes). Respond by getting down on their level, and if necessary use your body to create a space between the children. Be certain that the hurt child is being tended and then say, "Andrea, Be Kind! Hitting hurts, use gentle touches with your friends."

Be Gentle: watch your child and ask yourself, "Is this behavior likely to be harmful to something in the environment? (a toy, a window, a shelf, etc.)." If the answer is yes, tell your child, "Be Gentle!" and then tell him how you want him to treat the environment. You might say, "Be gentle! Windows are for looking, use your hammer on the block."

When we intervene with the children we want to use positive language. This means we will direct the children to do what we want them to do, rather than focusing on what we want them to stop doing.

For example, if a child begins to stand on a chair, I might say, "Be safe! Put your bottom in the chair, chairs are for sitting." If you are not used to this style of guidance, it can take some practice before it feels natural.

If you are interested in learning more about positive child guidance you can look at the following websites:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH6119>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4ATYLnzoe4>

<http://www.kidsgrowth.com/resources/articledetail.cfm?id=1211> (Jane Nelsen on Positive Discipline)

I also recommend all of Jane Nelsen's books on Positive Discipline and the text book by my mentor, Darla Ferris Miller, Positive Child Guidance (older editions are inexpensive).