



Terrific TWOs



SESSION 4

Words That Work

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Parenting Now!
to strengthen families

CURRICULUM • TRAINING • PRODUCTS

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Words That Work

KEY CONCEPT

- ▶ Parents have a powerful influence on their children's developing communication skills.



GOALS FOR SESSION 4

By the end of the session, parents will:

1. Understand the power of their words and body language.
2. Learn communication tools called “Words That Work” to guide their TWOs.
3. Learn ways to encourage TWOs’ language development.



AGENDA

1	Gathering Time FLIP CHART	15 minutes <i>before session begins</i>
2	Welcome and Group Sharing FLIP CHART	10 minutes
3	Session 3 Review and Home Practice FLIP CHART	5 minutes
4	Burning Issues/Hot Tips FLIP CHART	15 minutes
5	Through a Child's Eyes ACTIVITY	20 minutes
6	Break	10 minutes
7	The Power of Communication FLIP CHARTS/VIDEO	35 minutes
8	Encouraging TWOs' Language Development FLIP CHART/ACTIVITY/HANDOUT	10 minutes
9	Session Review and Take Home Ideas FLIP CHART/HANDOUTS	5 minutes
10	Preview Next Session	1 minute
11	Circle Time ACTIVITY	10 minutes



PREPARE FOR SESSION 4

1. Review Content

- Read the agenda
- Study the session material and supplemental material: *Activity Slips*
- Preview the video: *Words That Work*

2. **Connect with families.** Phone parents who you feel need individual support or anyone who missed the last class. Call parent(s) who signed up for snacks.

3. Prepare Materials

- Copy handouts if needed

Developmental Spotlight

Take Home Ideas

Home Practice

- Create flip charts

Blank (Parent Interests and Concerns)

What I Want to Avoid

What I Want to Do

Words That Work

Descriptive Praise

Encouraging and Reinforcing Positive Behavior

Reflective Listening

Blank (Encouraging Language)

Session 4 Summary (*used in Session 5*)

- Gather supplies (needed every session)

Blank name tags and felt tip pens

Flip chart, colored markers, and easel

Pens or pencils and plain paper

Plates, cups, and napkins for snack



- Special supplies for Session 4

Flip charts

Group Guidelines (from Session 1)

Session 3 Summary

Problem-Solving Questions (from Session 2)

Activity Slips cut into strips

Jar for *Activity Slips*

PREPARE ROOM

1. Set up the video equipment and make sure everything works.
2. Arrange the room so that parents can sit in a semicircle and see the flip chart, VCR, and each other.
3. Set up supplies on a table: Name tags, pens and paper, and refreshments.
4. Relax, remember to breathe: Get ready to enjoy yourself and the families!



Before You Begin, Think About This

These first four sessions build a foundation of awareness for parents, giving them information and a way of thinking about their TWOs' developmental stage, who their child is as an individual, their own values and goals as a family, and the basics of communication that work with everyone. The next few sessions fill the family suitcase with many positive tools and allow parents to look at and discard “unwanted old baggage.” This session on language development and communication also begins the process of setting the family up for success.

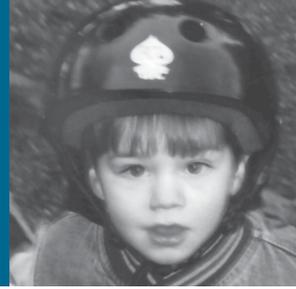
TWOs are busy learning language, the way it is used and its power to affect behavior and feelings. Language is the sea we swim in every day. Why not have it clean, clear, and healthy—rather than muddy or polluted?

There is a role-play exercise in which parents physically experience being talked to as a young child, followed by a discussion. After the break the group examines their own family communication patterns, both positive and negative, followed by video clips and discussion of “Words That Work.” The last topic explores a few simple, enjoyable ways parents can encourage their TWOs' language development. Parents usually find the role-play exercise very valuable for understanding their child's point of view. They also find the parenting tools offered in “Words That Work” and the ways to encourage language development very useful.

If literacy is an issue for parents in your group, adjust the material accordingly.

Adapt the Parent Educator script to meet your own and your group's style and needs.

SESSION 4



1 Gathering Time

15 minutes *before* session begins



POST FLIP CHART: Group Guidelines (from Session 1)

Be in the room well before the session is scheduled to begin to greet parents. As parents gather, greet them warmly by name. Take this opportunity to follow up with parents about issues brought up in the previous session, to specifically acknowledge the contribution they make to the group, or to help connect them with each other. Begin the session on time.

2 Welcome and Group Sharing

10 minutes

Welcome back to the Terrific TWOs!

Today's topic is about the power of language and communication in our lives and the lives of our TWOs.

We are constantly teaching our children how to communicate through our words and our actions. We'll talk about how we can establish positive communication patterns in our families, and how parents can help encourage their TWOs' healthy language development.

I want to hear your ideas and concerns. What interests or concerns do you have related to your child's language and communication?



POST BLANK FLIP CHART

As parents offer their interests and concerns, list them on the flip chart.

During the session discussions and activities, point out how the discussion relates to specific parent interests and concerns. It is helpful to check in with the parent at this time and ask, "Is this what you (wanted to know, were concerned about, etc.)?"

Let's quickly share any announcements and good ideas, special things you have been doing at home or out of the home, things that might help others in the group.

Post information about these ideas and activities on the board or a flip chart.



3 Session 3 Review and Home Practice

5 minutes



POST FLIP CHART: Session 3 Summary

Last session we:

- Talked about children’s individual differences with an emphasis on temperamental tendencies.
- Discussed how knowing and appreciating who our children are as individuals can help us design experiences that will help them “round out” their temperamental tendencies.
- Learned to ask ourselves: What specific ways can I help my child develop temperamental muscles that may not be strong?
- Practiced changing negative labels into encouraging language, making it easier to talk about differences and challenges.

Check in with parents about ***Home Practice***.

How did it go with your “muscle building” Home Practice?

Let’s take one of your examples and go through it together. Who has an example to share?



4 Burning Issues/Hot Tips

15 minutes



Note to the Parent Educator: Ordinarily, this is a time set aside each week for parents to bring up specific, “burning issues” related to their parenting. They may ask for help in problem-solving these issues or simply want to hear “hot tips” about what others have done in similar situations. Parents can listen supportively to each person, and, if wanted, help resolve an identified problem.

During this weekly group discussion time, your tasks, as the Parent Educator, are to encourage parents to share concerns, help them connect with each other, and facilitate the problem-solving process. When a parent offers a tip that reflects a principle from the *Terrific* TWOs series, you can label the principle and refer to it. This is a good way to review important ideas from the series with parents’ own examples.

Use the Burning Issues/Hot Tips problem-solving format to help parents with a current unresolved situation and also to understand and celebrate their successes. Successes may seem to parents like “luck” or because “it just worked out,” rather than that they planned well, took action (or refrained from it), or in other specific ways created the success. When parents understand how they created a successful situation and share about it, they are more likely to repeat their positive behavior. This is also something they can then help their children learn to do as they grow older. “What did I do that made it turn out well?”

Typical issues for parents of TWOs, with related topic material, include:

- Bedtime problems (routines, safety, fear)
- Eating (power struggles, development, teaching, routines, limits)
- Toilet training (routines, physical development, teaching)
- Dressing/clothes (autonomy, developmental tasks, learning)
- Playing with others (sharing, turn-taking, social development)
- Separation (social/emotional development, routines)

If parents are having difficulty coming up with burning issues, you can use these typical issues to help them identify current challenges.



Although many opportunities are provided throughout the series to share ideas and to support each other, we have set aside a special time during each session to problem-solve concerns together. In our experience with the Terrific TWOs program, parents have found that the following questions help structure their problem-solving process. Our “burning issues” are explored in step 1, and our “hot tips” come in steps 2 and 3.



POST FLIP CHART: Problem-Solving Questions (from Session 2)

Problem-Solving Questions for a situation that bothers me:

Step 1: Information-Gathering Questions

- What happens? (Including before and after the problem)
- When does it happen?
- Where does it happen?
- How often does it happen?
- Who is involved?
- What have I tried so far?

Step 2: Prevention Question

- What are ways to prevent the problem?

Step 3: Learning Questions

- What does my child not know and need to learn?
- How can I help my child learn it?
- Is there a possible negative side effect (fear, shame, guilt, etc.) to what I plan to do?

These Learning Questions help us view problem behavior as an opportunity to teach TWOs what they need to know. This process opens up a range of possibilities for handling a problem. These questions are useful at every age and stage.

Now let's use the questions to change a problem situation into a learning moment.

Who has an example of recent unwanted behavior from your child?

Work through the process using a parent example with the large group.

I'll post these questions each week and you can use them to help each other problem-solve issues of concern related to your parenting.



5 Through a Child's Eyes

20 minutes

- Part One: “Encouraging” Messages
- Part Two: Transition to Anger
- Sharing About “Encouraging” Messages
- Sharing About “Angry” Messages
- Sharing About “Side by Side” Messages
- Concluding Comments



Note to the Parent Educator: This is a very powerful exercise for most parents. Parents pair up and take turns, one standing, one sitting on the floor. First they each say “encouraging things” to each other, maintaining eye contact, and then they trade roles. Next, they get angry with each other and again, trade places. It helps them in understanding their child’s physical point of view, especially when parents are angry. The exercise is most effective when you give very little introduction or preparation. It is important to leave enough time, about a half hour, to do the exercise and discussion, even if that means a shorter presentation on other issues. Anything you missed or didn’t cover thoroughly can be reinforced in later discussions.

Since parents do use an angry voice during this exercise, find alternate arrangements for any babies or young children who might be present during the discussion.

During this exercise, you will ask parents to role-play. Parents seem more comfortable and actively involved in this exercise when the Parent Educator role-plays the lines with them.

If the exercise is a physical impossibility for a parent, you can make modifications, such as having one parent sit on a chair and one parent stand on a chair.

The goal of this exercise is to give parents the physical experience of being a small child, and for them to understand the impact of how parents look through the eyes of a child.



Today's exercise and our topic, Words That Work, both have to do with the way we talk with our children, especially how we guide them and explain our expectations to them. It's a lot about building relationships and about helping our children learn healthy communication skills. We will also be talking after the break about ways to help our TWOs learn language.

Let's begin with an exercise.



Part One: "Encouraging" Messages

Pair participants up facing one another, with **one standing** and **one sitting on the floor**.

Tell the standing "parent":

Say **three encouraging things** to your "child," looking down. For example, "Thanks for putting your toys away. It was a big help!"

Pause as they do it.

Now, parents who are sitting, respond with three encouraging things of your own, looking up. (You are a TWO who can talk.) For example, "I like when you sing to me, Daddy."

When they have finished, ask the partners to change places; then repeat with a similar phrase.

Now sit side by side and each say three encouraging things to each other.

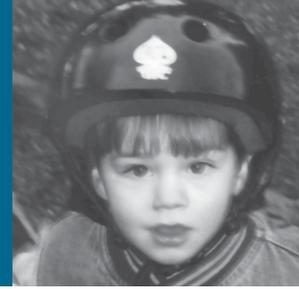
Pause as they do it.

Part Two: Transition to Anger

We don't **always** say encouraging things to our children (with humor), so today we will **pretend** that sometimes we get angry with our children.

We will repeat the exercises being "angry." Stand at your full height if you are the standing "parent." Think of something that has made you angry recently, and say, "**I'm so angry at you!**" three times, looking down, louder each time, the louder the better.

Be serious. Some parents have a tendency to laugh, but stay with the instructions. Stay at your full height and sound angry, so your partner will get the benefit of the exercise.



It is important for the Parent Educator to say the words with parents, louder each time. This helps them get into the exercise.

Go! "I am so angry at you!" "I am so angry at you!" "I AM SO ANGRY AT YOU!"

Pause as parents complete this portion of the exercise.

Now the "child" sitting on the floor will say the same thing, "I'm so angry at you!" three times, to the parent, looking up, louder each time. Go!

When finished, have partners switch places and repeat both parts. Give parents a few moments to complete this portion of the exercise.

Next sit side by side, each repeating, "I'm so angry at you!" one more time each.

Ask the parents to return to their chairs as a large group and share how this experience felt in each position.

Sharing About "Encouraging" Messages

What was it like, as the "child" sitting on the floor, hearing or saying the **encouraging things**?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- vulnerable
- small
- loving



What was it like, as the parent standing above, hearing or saying the **encouraging things**?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- pleasant
- condescending
- reassuring

Sharing About "Angry" Messages

What was it like, being the child, on the floor, **seeing and listening** to someone sounding angry with you from above?



Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- vulnerable
- scared by the anger from above
- helpless
- his/her face looked so different from down there

What was it like as the child **trying** to be angry with someone towering above you?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- frustrating
- ineffective trying to “get” their anger way up to the standing person
- feeling powerless

When you were the “parent,” what was your experience in the standing position, saying to your “child,” **“I’m so angry at you!”**?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- powerful
- uncomfortable
- like they were in charge

When you were the “parent,” what was your experience in the standing position, listening to your “child” say, **“I’m so angry at you!”**?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Typical examples include:

- amused
- annoyed
- not threatened

Sharing About “Side by Side” Messages

How was it communicating side by side?

Give parents a few minutes to share. Usually everyone agrees that it was much more comfortable both hearing and expressing the anger.

Many parents say that this exercise helps them to understand their child’s experience from a physical point of view. Ask parents to share how the insights they have gained might affect their parenting behavior. Be sure to emphasize the following points:



- This was a role-playing situation, where you knew it was pretend, and the other person may not be important to you emotionally, maybe even is a stranger. Imagine what it is like for your child in this situation when you are very important to them emotionally and you are not pretending, because you really are angry with them.
- Why do you suppose children learn so quickly to say, “Up, up, up!”? It may not be because they want you to hold them, for loving or reassurance, but that they just want to be up, where you are and where the power is. Standing or sitting on counters and highchairs seem to serve their purpose at these times, although perhaps not yours.
- Some parents report that if they immediately drop to the child’s level when a “tantrum” begins, that it helps to lessen the upset feelings, and the child becomes more flexible and less upset. What from our exercise would explain that?

Typical responses:

- Child feels understood, less alone with his feelings.
- Child feels parent cares and is showing that.
- The physical distance is less and so is the emotional distance.

Concluding Comments

We can see from our exercise and your comments that there is power, not only in the words we use and model for our children, but there is also the impact of our position, tone of voice, and facial expression.

These “non-word” messages may be more powerful to a small child than the words themselves.

6 BREAK

10 minutes

Tell parents the group will take a break for 10 minutes for refreshments and to use the restroom.

End of Preview Material