

## Enterprise Talk: a handrail to authenticity and integrity

*Taking care to control what you say can revolutionize your relationships with children in the classroom, at home, or on the street.*

- If you take on the challenge of Enterprise Talk, see if the switch to this way of talking works for you, and commit yourself to continual application, you can make a major change in your life.
- If you count each of the listed ways you talk, you can see your habits.
- If you want to change, I promise that Enterprise Talk will make you a better teacher and a better parent.

Sometimes we may bring habits that recall the words, "Do as I say, not as I do." Possibly when we are angry, we can find ourselves saying things the way our parents did when they, too, were out of touch with themselves. Enterprise Talk is a handrail to grab in times of difficulty in order to match who we want to be with our actions and more truly the good person we are inside.

*We have integrity when we act as we say we believe.*

*We are authentic when we are being in each moment true to the depth of our spirit.*

Teaching and parenting operate inside a human relationship. The quality of that relationship depends upon one's integrity and authenticity. Achieving those virtues challenges teachers and parents to act in the best interest of others and truly be who they are themselves as people right now, fully present. In each moment, good times and bad, it takes willingness to being changed by others and a willingness to trust one's natural intelligence, natural wisdom, and natural warmth to guide the way. Gradually, as we try to walk our talk and be true to ourselves, we form the person we are in that relationship.

To teach well or parent well requires an awareness of self like a security camera constantly watching ourselves in action. Self-awareness enables us to anticipate what we are about to do, so we can take just a moment to consider what's first on our mind, and, if necessary, invent a better thing to say. That awareness in the moment and the pause to think allows us to lay aside old ingrained habits and explore a more authentic way of being. These little moments of correction enable us to act less out of habit and more spontaneously fresh. Gradually, small check with alteration by small check with alteration, all of us can become more comfortable simply relaxing in the complexity and ambiguity of being with children — flowing freely and fearlessly — giving them the gift of being completely present for them with unconditional, positive regard.

### Getting Better

I have treasured deep discussions with my colleagues about what we as a community want to see happen for children. Over years of preschool teaching, those conversations (and especially the spicy arguments) have gradually made my values and approach more clear. Out of that dialog, I constructed the guides of Enterprise Talk. These are my four indicators of the children doing what I value.

- I am most happy with education when I see children being who they are, individually and uniquely, engaged in actions that they choose, at once benefiting themselves and the group.
- I enjoy seeing children having fun, laughing and being playful while doing real work, alone and with others achieving group goals cooperatively.
- I like it when children step willingly into something new and stay focused at their intentions until they achieve their chosen ends.
- I am thrilled when children recognize the significance of their personal expression and when they spontaneously celebrate each other's achievements.

I can tell when I am doing better as a parent or a teacher if two things are aligned.

- 1 *I see the learners doing what I value, and simultaneously*
- 2 *I am being the person I most want to be.*

“Right” has both integrity and authenticity aligned. Together they resonate, marking the moment as good.

### **Enterprising Children**

I can't imagine a more worthy goal for the early years of childhood education than for all our children to enter common school with a passion to explore, express, and listen and the disposition to act interdependently and responsibly. (I have a full list of these outcomes on the Speaking Up for Children page: [Sixteen Capabilities](#).) Can you imagine what would happen to the planet if all children at age six were curious, cooperative and perseverant individuals, without hostility, passivity, or resistance in any form? Since we don't have a word in English that encompasses all of these dream dispositions, I call the set of them **Enterprise. Boldness. Energy. Ingenuity. Grasping the moment at hand. Readiness to embark on new adventures.** That word encompasses it for me. So I can say my goal for the early years of childhood is for all children to be *Enterprising Children*.

My dream for all children to be Enterprising Children is actually possible to attain. The first step is to have millions of people agree that the cluster of values I refer to as Enterprise is vital, even crucial, for our children and for a healthy planet. Once we agree, we can help each other create the conditions for Enterprising Children to flourish.

Like a carrot, however, we cannot make Enterprise grow. We cannot make children be interdependent or curious. It won't work to say, “*All right, children, work hard! Get things created. Work together and help each other when they need it. Be happy. And be proud of yourselves!*” No amount of pushing and prodding will create enterprise. You can't push that string, so to speak. Enterprising Children grow into fruition by being in an optimum environment, one where the adults are careful and intentional.

Anyone who is willing to take on the journey of Enterprise Talk will attain a deeper understanding of leadership and be able to create a classroom or family of happy, energetic, enterprising children. Enterprise Talk is the handrail to hold to make those in-the-thick-of-it self-corrections necessary to set aside ineffective habits and cultivate a richer way of being. The journey begins with a clear commitment to those values I call enterprise. If you share with me the values inherent in a cooperative, democratic learning community, I invite you to study Enterprise Talk as thousands have, all of whom say they would never go back to how they were before.

### **How We Really Have Influence**

Before we get into the specifics, I'd like to step back and look at effective leadership, how one wins friends and influences people, so to speak. Both of the words teaching and parenting seem to have a simple meaning when we think of them as a job description or the name of a role. But neither has any meaning when used as a verb to teach or to parent. How do you teach? How do you parent? Both are incredibly complex endeavors, which some call an art. Mastery does exist: we do know when we see it in others or experience it firsthand. Since teaching and parenting are what I want you to be able to do better from your exploration of Enterprise Talk, I want to clarify the verbs.

First, I want to make clear that I am not talking about the stage-setting aspects of teaching or parenting — the all-consuming work, time, and energy spent on ensuring great opportunities: planning, reflecting, documenting, gathering, and creating the physical conditions for the learner to experience. Rather than addressing before and after things we do when influencing others, I am focusing on the “being with” side of influence — the facilitative leadership component — being with each child in an enhancing way and responding to what in the moment sustains and supports a learning community. I use the verbs to *teach* or to *parent* here to refer to the way we bring ourselves to the children in the moments we are with them.

I have watched hundreds of hours of videotape in the pursuit of an understanding of how we have influence upon children's learning. I began to see general patterns of effectiveness despite all the

complexity and individuality of people and circumstance. Facilitative actions contained a common core: people who are maximally effective, do three things:

- 1 **They model.** They act as they want the learners to act. If they want learners to be friendly toward each other, they are friendly toward each person. If they want people to laugh, they laugh. If learners do not know how to do something, they show them how themselves. If they want the community to create beauty and order, they create beauty and order themselves. Each aspect of their intentions is visibly present in their being.
- 2 **They inform.** They tell about things. They describe happenings. They recount events. They tell stories. They explain. They talk about opportunities, problems and possibilities. They share what they have seen and done.
- 3 **They respond positively to what they value.** Good teachers don't dwell much on inability. Rather they support incremental goodness in the direction they wish learners to grow. Since teachers continually lead learners into areas of risk and incompetence, they take care to respond assuredly with warmth and support in a way that fits each individual.

When I think of the people who have had the greatest difference in my life, I can see them doing exactly this to me. Each was an example of someone who lived a rich, full life in accord with their expressed ideals (**model**). Each told tales of their lives and opened worlds of possibility and promise that were not there before (**inform**). And when I tried new things, took my first tentative steps in new endeavors, each was supportive. I left encounters with them feeling affirmed and ready to go on trying stuff (**respond positively**). If we examine the lives of great leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Mahatma Ghandi, Pope Francis, and the late Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, John Stanford, we see this, too.

Nothing in these three ways has anything to do with control. Nothing directs. Nothing demands. To model, inform, and respond positively is to choose a path that lets others be who they are. It leaves open choices for them and yet it influences them strongly, too, I am willing to say unequivocally that those three fundamentals form the central basis of influence we have on other people. I believe this is true in all domains — in business, in school leadership, and in the classroom. The challenge is to behave this way consistently especially when things get dicey. The tough times of emotional distress are when our more manipulative habits tend to slip out.

### **The Slippery Path of Habit**

We are our habits, whether we like to admit it or not. We are our synapses and neurons and continue to impulsively react in the ways that have been practiced. It is hard for anyone to be any other way than how they have been. Although we may profess to understand great teaching, behaving as great teachers do is tough.

When I am healthy... When I am rested... When life at home is calm... When the children seem to like what they are doing... When the moon and stars are in proper alignment... When you-know-who is absent... I can model the way I want children to be, inform without pushing, and spread warmth and good cheer.

But, give me trouble, test me with something unexpected, give me stress, and I become a less flexible person. Out of my anxiety and discomfort I speak habitual neural pathway talk; old words and voice tones of control and disapproval arise from somewhere. Out I blurt and poof the children's spirit snuffs out like a candle flame. Before I know it, I find myself trapped in battles of will. I am emotional. I hear myself blaming others. I want control. I want compliance, which is the very antithesis of teaching! When my children need teaching the most, my words and actions betray, and the children see and know and be that way, too.

### **Being the Person I Most Want to Be**

In times like these, I want a way to self-correct, because in the dicey moments I am not receptive to anyone's help. I want a handrail just for me to get stabilized. I want something solid to guide me — something to help me set aside these dominant, ineffective habits — something to help me create a

positive path, so I have access again to my humanity and my positive regard for the children. Like spilled milk, I want to clean it up myself. Make it better. Calling attention to the mistake most likely would make an edgy situation worse.

I offer Enterprise Talk as a handrail to grip when one needs stability. It is a measurable, concrete delineation of rules for talking to children in times of difficulty. It is a guide to maintain the path you choose for yourself. — a way for you to practice expressing yourself to children, inventing in the dicey moment, without having in mind only your old habits. Enterprise Talk helps you model, inform and respond positively to what you value. Bit by bit, self-correction by self-correction, new try by new try, we change.

## Enterprise Talk

### THE PROHIBITIONS

First rules of Enterprise Talk are **No Directions. No Questions. No Praise.** This is an admonition to eliminate doing what doesn't work. I ask you to set aside whatever you think of these rules and take on the challenge.

#### NO DIRECTIONS

**I invite you to stop telling other people what to do.** Such talk is rampant: *Come in. Sit down. Hang your coat over there. Use your words. Stop that. Put it in the trash.* In some cases, directions constitute most of what teachers say to children. If you think about it, when a child is told what to do, he or she has only two choices: (a) do as requested — *acquiesce*, or (b) not do as requested — *rebel*. Neither acquiescence nor rebellion is a value I want to teach. They are not on my list of attributes of good character. I want children in my community to take the initiative to act responsibly for the good of themselves and the good of others. If adults constantly tell children what to do, they eliminate the possibility of initiative. In environments filled with directions, children wait to pick up until they are told.

#### NO QUESTIONS

**I invite you to stop asking questions about what to do.** *What are you supposed to be doing right now? Where does your coat go? How do you think she feels when you do that? What do you say to him?* Most of us have been told that asking questions is a good idea, and some types of questions are indeed worthwhile. However, most questions teachers ask are not. Here is the test I use: if a child successfully answers the question, the question may have been worthwhile. If the child does not, you have given the child a lesson that says, "I am not capable here." He or she is in an unpleasant spot and knows it. Those children you know who answer questions readily may already be doing well in your school. Those children you most want to engage often will not do so if you start with a question. ("What did you do in school today?") Questions are often the least effective means of eliciting what you desire. The guides of Enterprise Talk are fully testable. You can see for yourself they work. I challenge you to stop asking all questions of children, especially in free play times, until you fully acquire habits of talking of which you are proud.

#### NO PRAISE

**I invite you to stop praising what children do.** *Good job. That's a pretty picture! Lovely. I like the way Mary and Louise are sitting. Nice, Jenny!* I am not referring to stopping all positives. I wish to direct your attention to that subset of positive responses in which you make judgments. Being evaluative is the problem here. Any statement that appraises the value of children or their work can be counterproductive. Imagine someone says to you, "I love your hair! It looks great today." If you have just had your hair done, it feels good — the words seem genuine and can be warmly received. If your hair is daily, regular hair, the words of praise are suspect — you may want to check the mirror. Often the actions or works of children are not self-recognized as worthy. They don't think their painting is pretty, but it may

have other qualities. If one child's work is praised, the other children feel the comparison and may wonder if what they had chosen to do is less worthy. Praise leads children into seeking approval rather than their own intrinsic pleasure. Hoping to attract the rest of the class the teacher says she likes the way Mary and Louise are sitting, but the statement (1) is not likely to attract the other children to circle time and (2) it may send exactly the wrong message to Mary and Louise. It is easy for some children to get trapped into striving to be very, very good, to get all the approval they can, so people will like them. It may be that the best message for Mary and Louise is, "Get a life!" The major problem with words of praise is that often they may not be authentic.

The purpose of the admonition to stop the directions, questions and praise is to open the opportunity of the moment to say something more helpful, honest, and effective. The challenge is present to prove or disprove this yourself. You can systematically test this proposition immediately with your own children, just as thousands of teachers already have. The proof is in the efficacy in your own life.

Most people at this point are somewhat aghast at this radical proposal. What is missing is a clear understanding of what you can say. These are the six kinds of actions to promote in your teaching.

## THE GUIDES

### DESCRIPTIONS

*You have a yellow bolt. Four of you are working together. Clouds of pink fill the page. Those are called quads. The pen dried out. It smells sour.* **Descriptions convey in language what the child can perceive presently—what the child is now seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, smelling.** Here is the essence of being informative. This talk gives children a freedom to be who they are in the moment, attend to what they want to attend to, explore, invent, and create. The children hear the vocabulary for what they see before them, providing the fastest way to learn language and the tool language gives to think with.

### NARRATIONS

*You brought the stapler. Jenny is folding the scarves. You are filling it up to the very top. Mark is handing out the cups. Carlos joins us. You hung up your coat.* **Narrations put the child's actions into words as the child is doing it—like a sports announcer delivering play by play coverage of events as they occur. Most narrations start with "You..." or the child's name.** These statements are factual and objective, as descriptions are; however, they are about the child's actions not perceptions. Descriptions are about input, what the children are taking in through their senses; narrations are about output, what the child is doing. Besides teaching verb vocabulary in a powerful way, this talk highly reinforces the child's action. It recognizes and implicitly validates behavior. Most of the time, what an adult narrates will be repeated again and again. You can test that for yourself. Say, "You jumped down!" after a child jumps, and the probability is high the child will jump down again.

This powerful reinforcing quality of narrations has two dangers. If you use it too much or for inconsequential, well-established actions, children may be annoyed. "You are breathing." But for the first time a child ties her shoe, "You tied your shoe!" Authenticity, again, is the criterion. The second danger is to use a narration for actions you do not value. People do it often. "You left your coat on the floor." "You bumped the table." "You spilled." "You knocked over their building." Narrations support these actions, too. The child may be more likely to do this again. You may have wondered why that child keeps knocking over the buildings. That is who they are, of course. The child learns to believe that who I am is a building destroyer.

### SUBJECTIVE-TALK

*I am watching you. I'll be right back. I have to go get the lunch. I saw you and Yolanda at the store. My cat keeps eating the butter. I enjoy seeing your paintings. I have towels if you need them. Subjective-talk is about your own actions and thoughts that relate to the child's current situation. Most self-talk statements begin with "I..."* These are usually easy for teachers to include in their talk, although some teachers have never been told that sharing of themselves personally with the children is exactly what to do. Your gift to children is who you are uniquely. What you have experienced, what you see, think, and feel is the substance of what you give.

### Putting it Together

Those are the three central ways of expressing you that allow others to be who they are and you to be more like yourself. Descriptions, narrations, and subjective-talk are the guides to formulating what you want to say, especially in situations where you are uncomfortable. Enterprise Talk says, "When you want to give a direction, question or praise, it is time to put a cork in your mouth and think. There must be a way to manage here without controlling what the children do or decide."

For example, Mark and Terrance are squabbling over something they found in the corner of the play yard. They are obviously upset and you know nothing of the cause. Because nothing is simple, you are headed inside with Shasha who has just hurt her finger and is crying, too. Enterprise Talk creates this kind of dialog internally: "*Mark give it to me... oops... direction... Knock it off you two... can't say that either... hmmm... all I can think of are directions or questions... ok... what do I say... this is hard... start with I... I... I... where am I in this?*"

In the interim, words such as these have a chance to be created: "*I am headed inside with Shasha. I can't help you two boys right now. I want to know what you found. Shasha needs a bandage. I would like you come along, if you want, so we can talk.*"

It may not be easy at first, but it does get easier. I trust that the change from talking the first thought to a form that follows these guides will allow you to authentically express what you truly think and feel. You may treat children with more respect, allow them to take more responsibility, and even have significantly fewer conflicts to solve. This I guarantee: if all the teachers you teach with follow the guides of Enterprise Talk, the children will, too, with each other.

You may be thinking, "How do I get children to do what they need to be doing if I can't tell them what to do? (Tom doesn't know what I really face.)" Yes, that is a problem, before I address it, I would like you to consider two more guides in Enterprise Talk. These point to ways to be more effective in expressing positives. The more you support the children who are doing what you desire, the less you will feel the need to direct. Here are two effective ways to respond warmly when children take positive *initiative*, when they act *courteously and cooperatively* with each other, and when they *persevere* at difficulties.

### NON-VERBAL RECOGNITION

Wink. Smile. Send a positive message in the way you hold your body, the expression on your face and the noises you make. *Wooo! Zowie! Yeah-yeah-YEAH!* Communicate your pleasure in valued behavior by facial expressions and body language. I think it is difficult to overstate the marvelous power and effectiveness of non-verbal positive communication. You can give a "high-five" to children at the beginning of the year and still do it at the end of the year. It never seems to wear out.

I know a school that decided to try a Non-verbal Recognition Day. For one day all the teachers decided to give more non-verbal positives to everyone, each other, the children, the principal, the secretaries, the maintenance staff, the kitchen staff — everyone. Trying it once, they were convinced. They had the best day ever. The children were happier. They behaved better. They worked harder. And everyone was happy to be there. I would like to see schools make Mondays always an enhanced Non-verbal Recognition Day, to get everyone back in tune after

the weekend.

#### INTRINSICALLY-PHRASED RESPONSES

If you take a glance back at the values I described at the beginning of his article, you can see that what I want to see happen with children, as well as the Sixteen Capabilities, would ideally be self-perpetuating. The children would keep taking initiative and acting responsibly because they wanted to, not because the adults were artificially supporting it. Extrinsic means coming from outside. We want children to do educative things because it is *intrinsically* beneficial; they would keep doing it for inner reasons that may or may not be acknowledged.

We cannot provide intrinsic rewards, but we can talk about them as existing in our minds. By talking about beneficial thoughts and feelings that are occurring for me, children may be more likely to notice something like that occurring for them, too.

*I clean up the kitchen after a meal, because it's so nice to enter a clean kitchen to start cooking.*

*I floss my teeth because I have found I feel better after I do it.*

I listed as many words as I could find that described those inner satisfactions that keep people doing the difficult and challenging things in their lives. When I culled the list to those that applied most readily to children, I found they generally fit into four clusters.

#### **ENJOYMENT** “It’s fun to do, isn’t it?”

pleasure ~ delight ~ happiness ~ thrill ~ joy ~ amusement ~ gratification ~ savor  
the feeling inside ~ pride ~ satisfaction

#### **COMPETENCE** “You did it!”

success ~ mastery ~ know-how ~ expertise ~ accomplishment ~ achievement ~  
skillfulness

#### **CLEVERNESS** “That’s tricky.”

new ~ unique ~ brainy ~ smart ~ intelligent ~ bright ~ witty ~ ingenious ~ quick ~  
original

#### **GROWTH** “You’re sure getting bigger!”

ready for new challenges ~ older now ~ more grown-up ~ more independent

To offer an intrinsically-phrased response, I place one of these ideas in a sentence that either talks about those feelings in myself or offers that as a tentative possibility in the child’s experience. For example, a child shows me her painting; I can use the base idea in each of the clusters to invent an honest response.

*I sure enjoy painting, too! You have become a painter. It feels good to create something totally original, doesn’t it? You couldn’t do that last year!*

I found this difficult to do at first, so I posted this list near the children’s lockers where I could look at it every day, and parents could see it, too. When I highlight naturally occurring feelings of self-worth and self-satisfaction that accompany competent and socially constructive behavior in an authentic way, children light up like I flicked a switch. The wheels seem to turn inside.

#### DESCRIPTIVE CUE SEQUENCE

Now to address the problem of getting children to do what you want them to do without directing. (Once you decide to not tell children what to do, you might as well include dispensing with those artificial standbys, “you need to... wear a coat” and “it’s not ok to... scream.” Who is ‘needing?’ Who is the one with the ‘ok’ in mind?) Coats keep us warm. Screaming gives me a headache. We face the challenge to talk straight — to say what we really mean from deep inside.

Instead of giving a direction, try this sequence.

- **Signal.** The child needs a cue, such as, “*It’s time to... get ready for outside*” or set some physical signal that means it is time to start — ring a bell, flash lights, play music, etc. I let the signal take effect. I wait 10 to 15 seconds, recognize those children that take desirable actions by describing, narrating or sending non-verbal recognition. I find that usually this works. If it is still not completed sufficiently, I go on down.
- **Describe what needs doing or where things are.** *The pens go back to the holder. Your coats are in your lockers.* In most cases this works.
- **Model the behavior you desire while describing your thoughts and decisions aloud with subjective-talk.** *This pen is left out. If it has no cap, it will dry out. I wonder where the cap is. Ah! There it is. I will put it on and place it where it is ready for use tomorrow.* This step is most used when the action is unfamiliar to model what is desired.
- **If, after a time, a child fails to voluntarily join the efforts, issue a clear direction.** For most of the things I want children to do, I can wait a very long time. Usually some children will take it upon themselves to do what is necessary for the community and some children resist.

(Here is a general rule I follow. You can try it if you like. I get concerned if the number of children who resist is more than 20% of the class. I call this the 80% rule: I want 80% of the class to function on the signals alone. For a group of 20, I am not concerned if 4 children stay uninvolved. Gradually they will come along with the majority. If it takes 2 or 3 months, I am happy. When they choose to join, it is completely their choice in Being. If it is more than 4 or after 4 months of waiting, I give a direction.)

- **Set a contingency.** I restrict participation in the next activity to completion of the desired actions. *When the water is off the floor, you can continue to play.*

This is another chart I place on the wall for teachers and parents to see. It cleverly stimulates a conversation about responsibility and facilitation among the adults who care for the children.

## Competency Acquisition — Making It Natural

Enterprise Talk is testable. These are not abstract attributes of teachers such as responsiveness, respect, or dedication. These are actions. Each of these six guides is both observable and measurable. This allows you to test what I have invited you to consider. If it works, it will yield the results I mentioned at the start: you will see children spontaneously doing what you value and you will be more like the teacher you have wanted to be.

Simply reading this doesn’t make the change. Nothing is that simple. [Richard Boyatris](#) outlines 6 stages in competency acquisition.

- **Recognition** — you have to learn some way exists
- **Comprehension** — you have to understand it by trying it out. Only by trying to create examples of these 6 guides will you begin to comprehend the distinctions
- **Self-assessment** — you can have the best intentions, but without actually devising a way to see the reality of yourself, it is difficult to isolate one’s deficits and celebrate one’s strengths.
- **Experimentation** — once you know what you do in reality, one enters a period where you play around with it, trying it this way and that, modifying, ignoring, or changing it, to see on how it works with children in different situations at home and at school.
- **Practice** — then once the intention is clear and you have discovered what works for you, it is time to practice. Practice is making a commitment to act this way 100% of the time. In my experience, practice takes at least a year.

- **Natural Ability** — now it is yours to use, stretch or disregard. It's usefulness as a guide can be discarded. The handrail is no longer needed when you can walk alone.

If you want to take this on, I recommend placing a short piece of masking tape on the back of your hand to count. A fine point permanent marker works well to tally each behavior. Most people start by counting the number of directions they give children. Twenty minutes during the most difficult time of the day seems sufficient to yield a representative sample. Mark each direction and stick the tape onto a record chart. Try again another day to see if you can lower the number.

If a child asks you what you're doing, I use, *"Well. I am working on how I talk to children. Each time I tell anyone what to do I mark this tape. I don't want to tell you what to do. You know that already! It sometimes just comes out. I'm working on being more like the person I want to be."*

All nine are easy to tally: the prohibitions decrease: directions, questions, and praise; the guides increase: descriptions, narrations, subjective-talk, non-verbal recognition, intrinsically-phrased responses, and descriptive cue sequence. Those who commit as a team to helping each other out, laughing at the mistakes and recommitting to the change of habits, have the greatest success.

## The Possibility of Integrity and Authenticity with Children

I know of nothing that I can say or recommend that contains such possibility for transformation. Following these guides for talking one can take positive steps to being less controlling of children and more honestly representing both one's values for children and one's own desire to be fully present to them. Nothing here tells you what to do, only to take care to act from your true base of power, you, being here right now with the gift of your true, honest, genuine self.

Leaders of all age groups, babies to adults have taken on the challenge of Enterprise Talk. Every one I know who has actually counted their talk habits and committed themselves to talk differently is happier with themselves and with the children. Here are some of their words.

*"Narration really stood out for me. Not only is it easy to do, but it takes the place of so much baloney I used to do. Much of that was simply to get my daughter to do things without igniting World War III. My old talk, "Good job, Tim. What a good boy!" has changed to "I see you cleaned your room." I had no idea this was so powerful. It works! Narration not only helps keep my children more aware of what is happening around them, it keeps them actively involved. My daughter starts to do all kinds of things when I start to narrate actions that I think are positive. My children love to hear me say what they are doing loud enough for others to hear. I have a lot of practice ahead, but I hope to be very good at using all the components of Enterprise Talk."*

*"The hardest part for me is not praising children's efforts, but I found yesterday that giving the children a high-five and smiling at them when they did a 'correct' action (looking both ways before crossing the road) worked much better than stopping them and praising them. They were quite right to be proud. I did not remind them of anything, and they watched for cars by themselves."*

*"Enterprise Talk is a different approach to guiding children, and even adults, in learning. The idea of no directions, no questions, and not praise was foreign to my understanding of an appropriate way to teach. In fact, when I first heard about it, I was a little blown away. Of the six components, the most unusual for me was subjective-talk. I tried starting sentences with 'I think...' or 'I see...' to give the children suggestions on how to proceed in their activities. The results were astounding! I found the children were responding in such a way I never thought they could. Instead of giving an order, such as telling a child to pick up when she was done, I used self-talk. I said, 'I see the art center still has some tissue paper and glue left out.' The child I wanted to influence looked up, so I said, 'I think the art area would be so much nicer if it was tidy for the next person who comes to do art.' Then I stepped back and watched the results. The child I was directing the comment to (without a direction) stood up, walked over to the art area, and cleaned up the remainder of the tissue. He even straightened the papers in the paper box! I was*

*amazed. Instead of saying, 'Great job,' I responded with 'I think the art area is a lot more fun to be in when it is straightened up.' The child looked at me with an expression of satisfaction on his face."*

I invite you to step into a new future for you in your teaching and parenting. The challenge lies in incrementally creating new ways of being at the very times one is stressed and challenged. The time when an ineffective habit arises is the moment of practice. Only in that juicy instant can one invent a new way and grow one bit better. The moment of error offers an opportunity to try a better way.

Right now you have the opportunity to test Enterprise Talk for yourself. The possibility is in your hands to act with more *integrity* — actually being the adult you say you are — and act with more *authenticity* — opening yourself honestly in each moment with children.

Since emergent positive ways of being need nurturing, it's nice to be around others who help. If you find it difficult, I can relate. It took me four years to finally get it down.