SPARK EDUCATION / A PARENT PHRASEBOOK

Preschool Parenting Scripts

Emotional Regulation, Routines & Big Feelings

For parents and caregivers of children ages 3-5



Words to try. Small actions that help.

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FIND THE MOMENT

A page for what is happening



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When a conversation needs more support

If you are concerned about your child's development, or they lose a skill they previously used, talk with their healthcare professional and ask about developmental screening. [14] Bring concrete observations to the child's teacher or support team. This phrasebook offers general education, not diagnosis, screening or individualized treatment.

Print only the pages you need on US Letter paper, at actual size or your printer's fit setting. The low-ink edition has the same words and page numbers. Page 17 is designed to keep nearby. The PDF contents and source numbers are clickable.

TRANSITIONS

When playtime has to end



The blocks are still becoming a city, and it is time to put on shoes.

Leaving involves more than hearing a direction: a child has to stop one plan and begin another. A visible next step gives your words something concrete to point to.

BEFORE THE CHANGE

"You are finishing your garage. After you park that car, we will put the loose blocks in the basket."

AT THE CHANGE

"First these blocks in the basket. Then shoes on. I will help with the blocks."

FEWER WORDS

"Blocks in. Then shoes."

Make the sequence visible

Point to the basket, then the shoes. Give one small job and begin alongside your child. If space allows, leave the finished garage standing or take a photo before packing it away.

When the plan is too much

Try one step: "Put this block here." Pause, show it and help. If a warning creates more worry, try a familiar cue instead. First/then explains the sequence; it does not make food, comfort or help something a child must earn.

Choose one transition today. What can your child see or do first?

Guidance: 1, 3 | Sources at the back

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

When feelings are too big



The outing is canceled, and your child is crying too hard to hear an explanation.

A child who is overwhelmed may need your presence more than a conversation. The useful first question is whether they can engage right now. Save questions and problem-solving for a time when they can.

DURING THE HARD MOMENT

"You wanted to go. I am here with you."

WHEN THEY CAN TALK OR SHOW YOU

"Was it disappointing when our plan changed? You can tell me, show me or just sit with me."

FEWER WORDS

"I am here."

Make room without leaving

Stay nearby, lower your voice and reduce noise or the audience if possible. Offer closeness or a little space, following your child's cues. A hug is an invitation. Check practical needs such as hunger or discomfort.

When words add to the upset

Stop adding explanations. Keep everyone safe and remain available. You can offer a familiar calming activity later without insisting on it. If your child corrects your guess about their feeling, accept the correction. They do not need to agree with your label.

Which kind of support does your child seek: closeness, space or quiet company?

Guidance: 4, 5 | Sources at the back

PRINT AND KEEP

Words to keep nearby



Choose the line that fits. Offer the action your child needs, and leave room for a response.

FOR A CHANGE

“First this small step. Then the next one.”

Point to the real item or picture. p. 4

FOR A BIG FEELING

“I am here with you.”

Stay available; save questions for later. p. 7

FOR A SAFETY LIMIT

“I will help keep us safe.”

Move the unsafe object or make space. p. 8

FOR A HARD TASK

“I can help you begin.”

Share a manageable part of the work. p. 12

FOR JOINING IN

“Want help asking?”

Offer an opening and respect the answer. p. 11

FOR YOUR OWN REPAIR

“I am sorry I shouted. I will try again gently.”

Take responsibility and change the next action. p. 16

Our family's words: