

# In-the-Moment Teaching

## of the Important Ideas from *Talking about Thinking*

*Talking about Thinking* is the second product in our *Thinking Series*. It's designed to help a child build thinking and communication skills when it comes to expressing wants, needs, feelings, and opinions. By increasing active thinking and communication skills, a child is better able to problem-solve, cope, and be social.

In-the-moment teaching during daily life of the important ideas taught in *Talking* is how a parent makes these concepts relevant and useful to their child. Here you will find additional examples of parents or other adults using some combination of our favorite in-the-moment teaching strategies:

- **Describe** when and how the child or someone else communicates/doesn't communicate along with the effects of communicating/not communicating.
- **Compare** what people are thinking and saying (or not saying).
- **Respond** when a child communicates.

Even if you do not purchase *Talking about Thinking*, check out the examples here as you might find them helpful. If you do not know what we mean by “in-the-moment teaching,” check out our separate *Tips & Topics* post on what it is.

### Important!

- Try not to be too wordy or talk too fast when you speak to your child. This helps them process what you're saying, and gives them the chance to chime in with their own communication. **Assume that in all of the following examples that the adult is speaking slowly, and is pausing between sentences.**
- Parents can learn when and how to gently prompt or encourage their child when it comes to communication (be this spoken or an alternative form of communication). **Your child's Speech-Language Pathologist can give you guidance on this.** For basic information on prompting, check out our *Tips & Topics* piece: “Spotlight; Prompting.”

### **Additional examples of in-the-moment teaching on *Talking about Thinking*.**

While waiting at the doctor's office, Mom shows Sophia video on her phone of dogs doing silly things.

Sophia: *"Funny dogs!"*

Mom: *"The dogs are funny! Sophia, you think the dogs are funny. I think the dogs are funny, too!"*

→ Mom did some awesome in-the-moment teaching simply by immediately responding to Sophia's social communication, and describing and comparing what she and Sophia are both thinking. While speaking to a child this way might sound odd or awkward, we believe this type of interaction will help them develop an understanding of thinking and to get better at sharing thoughts and feelings.

Jordan and Trey are playing a video game.

Jordan to Trey: *"You are so bad at this game."*

Dad: *"Trey, how do you feel about what Jordan just said? [Trey feels sad, he thinks Jordan is mean.] Jordan, because you told Trey he is bad at the game, Trey feels sad and thinks you are mean. Did you want to be mean when you said that? [Jordan says no.] What can you say to Trey? [Jordan says he's sorry.] Next time will you say out loud if you think someone is bad at something?" [Jordan says no.]*

→ In *Talking about Thinking*, there is an activity about when and why to keep certain thoughts quiet. Certain autistic kids have a hard time with this, but we believe they can get better at knowing when to share or not share an opinion. Note how Dad neutrally helps Jordan understand the negative effect of saying out loud his thought. We never want a kid to think they are "bad" because they struggle with being social.

Kristie and Ethan are coloring.

Kristie assumes Ethan is done with the blue marker and starts coloring with it. Ethan gets mad and yells: “Hey, gimme that! I'm not done with it!”

Dad: “Ethan, Kristie thought you were done with the blue marker because you are using the red one. Sometimes people guess wrong what you are thinking and that's OK. How about you two start over? Kristie, if you want to use the blue marker, what can you do?”

→ Dad neutrally worked in the important idea from *Talking about Thinking* that sometimes, people guess wrong what we are thinking. This is a concept that some autistic kids have a hard time grasping.

Dad and Lindy are in the car.

Lindy: “Daddy music!”

Dad immediately turns on the radio: “Okay, here's music! Lindy **thinks** she wants music, so Lindy says, ‘Daddy music.’ Now Daddy knows Lindy wants music!”

→ Dad uses a real-time interaction to help Lindy understand the **value of expressing a want (which is a concept taught in *Talking about Thinking*)**.

He reinforces Lindy’s verbal request by immediately turning on the radio and telling her that because she said what she wanted he turned on the radio. For children who tend not to communicate wants and needs, it’s really important that parents immediately respond when they do. We have a separate *Tips & Topics* on reinforcement basics if you want to learn more.

Mom pretends not to see Noah and blocks his way. He says, “Move please.”

Mom immediately moves: “Yes, I’ll move! Because I know what Noah is thinking, I can move. Thanks, Noah, for saying ‘please!’”

→ Again, here is a real-time effort by an adult to connect a child's communication to a positive result. We love it when parents set-up a quick in-the-moment teaching opportunity by being a sneaky-trouble maker, like Mom did here!

During circle time sing-along, when the teacher rings a bell Brandon puts his hands over his ears and shuts his eyes. He doesn't speak, but makes an unhappy noise.

Teacher keeps ringing the bell: *"Brandon is thinking something. I do not know what Brandon is thinking, so I cannot help Brandon. Brandon, can you say what you want?"*

→ A judgment call is involved in situations where a child is distressed by sound, sight, smell or touch, especially for children who have a significant sensory aversion. Here, the teacher knows she will not cause excessive distress by continuing to ring the bell.

Justin – who uses a PECS® (Picture Exchange Communication System) for communication -- is pulling on Dad's clothes. Dad knows Justin wants to go outside, but holds off to motivate communication.

Chloe (Justin's sister): *"Daddy, let's go outside!"*

Dad: *"Chloe is thinking about going outside. Hmm, Justin is pulling on my shirt. I do not know what Justin is thinking. It would be a good idea for Justin to tell me what he is thinking."* [Dad points to Justin's PECS book as a prompt.]

→ Rather than getting the kids ready to go outside, Dad holds off to motivate Justin to communicate what he wants. Even if your child is nonverbal or has minimal verbal abilities, you can help them acquire expressive communication skills regardless of whether that child communicates by speaking. Talk to their SLP about what you can do and how to prompt your child in a way that is right for them.

Sadie and Emma are sitting at the table eating pizza.

Mom asks, “*Who wants more pizza?*”

Sadie says, “*I do,*” and Emma says nothing. Mom gives Sadie a piece of pizza but holds off on giving one to Emma. Emma starts crying.

Mom: “*Emma, Sadie got more pizza because she said, ‘I do.’ But you did not say anything. So I guessed you did not want more pizza. Let’s try again...Who wants more pizza?*”

→ Mealtime is a really great opportunity for some quick in-the-moment teaching!

Grandpa and Michael are at the playground.

Michael is on the swing and obviously wants Grandpa to push him. Grandpa pretends to guess wrong that Michael wants a push.

With a big smile and playful tone of voice, Grandpa: “*I think Michael is all done with swinging today! I think I will just go sit down on this bench for a while.*”

[Humming, Grandpa begins to walk away.]

Michael: “*More push please!*”

Grandpa immediately starts pushing: “*Michael says, ‘push please!’ Okay! I’ll push you more, Michael! I’m so happy you told me you want to keep swinging!*”

→ For kiddos who respond well to humor, being playful while doing in-the-moment teaching keeps things light and fun, but still productive!



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