



How to Talk About Other Children's Challenges - Examples

What Could Happen	What You Could Say
• “What is wrong with her [in the wheelchair]? Why can’t she walk?”	• “When Annie was born, her spinal cord was hurt. The nerves in our spinal cord tell our brain to move our legs when we walk. It doesn’t hurt; it just means that Annie uses a wheelchair to move around. I wonder if she will show you how it works. Should we ask her the next time we see her?”
• “Peter is a bad boy, he is always crying and yelling. The teachers have different rules for him.”	• “I hear you’re frustrated with Peter. It must be hard to watch a friend cry and be uncomfortable. I wonder what he is feeling? Why do you think he cries and yells so much?” • “Everyone is working on something. You’re working on using kind words. It sounds like Peter is working on helping his body to stay calm when he’s upset.”
• “William is stupid; he doesn’t talk like the other children.”	• “It’s not kind to call people stupid. William’s mouth works differently than yours and mine, and he’s working on making his words clear. Do you think there’s a way you could help him?”
• “Joe is always hitting people. He can’t hear us when we talk so he just hits and yells at us. I don’t want to play with him.”	• “That sounds really frustrating and unsafe. Remember, everyone is working on something. It sounds like Joe is working on using gentle hands and not hurting friends with his words. What’s something you’re working on?”
• “Leah is always following me around. She keeps grabbing me and when I tell her ‘I don’t want to play’, she tells me she is going to hurt me.”	• “It sounds like Leah really wants to be your friend. I notice that she hasn’t learned how to ask to play yet; she just grabs you. I wonder if we could let her know what makes you feel safe, comfortable, and ready to play? We could write it down in a letter for your teacher and she can help you talk to Leah.”
• “Jack called me a ‘Big baby!’ He said that if I don’t do what he tells me to do, he’ll tell everyone not to be my friend.”	• “When Jack says things to hurt your feelings, it is because he is feeling uncomfortable and is trying to protect himself. It is not okay to call other people names or threaten to hurt them. You can say, ‘Stop! Time Out Freeze! Do not call me names please. I will play with you if you keep me safe.’”
• “Sarah has a big mark on her face. What is that thing? She looks scary.”	• “Sarah has a birthmark on her face, like I have one on my arm. Sometimes they are small and sometimes they are large. Do you have any? You don’t have to be scared of it, it doesn’t hurt her. It’s just part of what makes her Sarah!”

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