

Enterprise Talk: a Handrail to Integrity and Authenticity

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Taking care to control what you say can revolutionize your teaching. I am offering you Enterprise Talk, an opportunity to grow into your dreams of excellence by taking on the challenges of these guides, seeing if they work for you, and committing yourself to your transformation. I promise that Enterprise Talk will make you a better teacher, but it is up to you to take steps to try it out. Before we get to specifics, I would like you to reflect upon some truths about teaching and learning.

Although the means of enabling others learn are complex and entangled, I want to highlight the solid fundamental: effective teaching exists in the relationship a teacher has with each child. In the striving to become a great teacher, you and I cannot ignore the challenge of being fully present in each moment for the benefit of the learner. You are human; learners are human. No assembly line approach works. Teachers have to love the unpredictable in order to teach well. Great teachers are comfortable playing in the complexity and ambiguity of being with learners — flowing freely and fearlessly — giving them the gift of being completely present with unconditional, positive regard.

I recognize this is easier said than done, but its truth is inescapable. *Teaching is human relationship*. The quality of that relationship depends upon the teacher's *integrity* and *authenticity*. Achieving those virtues requires teachers to make an intentional investment in continually clarifying what they value and truly being who they are. All good teachers I know have courage to talk openly about their values and have wisdom to attend to their humanity. Each moment they face the challenge, not to hide in safe habits, but to move forward with integrity and authenticity.

We have integrity when we steadfastly act as we say and believe.

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

Gradually, as we try to walk our talk and be true to ourselves, we form the person we become as we teach. A conscious commitment to being aware of what we are doing as we do it places us on a path to greatness. That awareness allows us to create the conditions that engender eagerness, and expression. Just as for learners, teachers have in each new day the opportunity to lay aside an ingrained habit and delve into a richer way of being.

The rewards for changing from old ways lie in the awareness of when one approaches that richer way of being. To reflect and grow, teachers have to have a way to tell when things are going “right” in order to evolve ever closer to what we hold to be enhancing for learners. I offer, therefore, this way to evaluate success in teaching. For me, as a teacher, what I do is “right” when

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

“Right” has both experiences aligned. Together they resonate, impelling learning forward.

➤ **The Learners Are Doing What I Value**

I have always treasured deep discussions with my colleagues about what we want to see happen for children. Over years of preschool teaching, those conversations and heated arguments have gradually made my values more clear to me. Out of that dialog, Enterprise Talk was born, so I want to make its set of values explicit.

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 have seen this happen in classrooms — it's awesome.

As a preschool teacher, I can't imagine a more worthy goal for early childhood education than to send all of our children into elementary school with a passion to explore, express, and cooperate — responsibly. I fantasize about the day when all children enter Kindergarten as curious, cooperative and perseverant individuals, without hostility, passivity, or resistance in any form.

I believe this dream is possible to attain. The first step, though, is for early childhood educators to agree that this cluster of values above, that I call Enterprise, is important... *no, crucial*. Once we have a general shared vision of the goal, it is easy to agree that a teacher cannot *make* children be this way. 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!” The truth is people grow in productive ways because they choose to. No amount of pushing and prodding will create enterprise. You can't push a string.

My proudest accomplishment (it may seem odd to say) is that I have learned how to create the conditions for achieving enterprise in children. A central part of my development came about by being careful how I talked to children in order to stay in integrity and be authentic in accord with my values. The guides have solidified as Enterprise Talk over years of helping teachers. Now you have it in your hands.

Any teacher who is willing to take on the journey of Enterprise Talk will attain a deeper understanding of leadership in teaching and be able to create a classroom 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 the ultimate values I have been describing here. If you share with me the values inherent in a cooperative, democratic learning community, I invite you to explore Enterprise Talk and transform your teaching.

How We Really Teach

Teaching, a word with a simple meaning when we use it as a job description and almost without meaning when we use it to refer to the labyrinthine complexity of facilitating educative experiences for individuals and groups. Since teaching is what I want you to be able to do better from your exploration of Enterprise Talk, I want to clarify what I refer to as “teaching” here.

I am not addressing the stage-setting aspects of teaching — the all-consuming work, time, and energy a teacher spends planning, reflecting, documenting, gathering, and creating the physical conditions for the learner to experience. This “before and after” side of teaching surely has its challenges. Here I am addressing the “with” side of teaching — the facilitative leadership component — being with each child in an enhancing way and managing the social influences that sustain and support a learning community. I use the word “teaching” here to refer to the way we bring ourselves to the children in the moments of here and now.

I have watched, with teachers, hundreds of hours of videotape in the pursuit of an understanding of how we have influence upon children’s learning. Despite all the complexity and individuality of great teachers, I began to see how their most facilitative actions contained a common core. Teachers, who most people agree are maximally effective, do three things:

- (1) *Teachers 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) *Teachers 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) *Teachers 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. Each of the influential people 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 (*respond positively*). If we examine the lives of great leaders, such as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi, we see this, too. Nothing in this way of being controls others. Nothing directs. Nothing demands. To model, inform, and respond positively is to choose a path that lets others be who they are. It leaves choices for them open, and yet it influences them

strongly, too, I would be willing to go so far as to say unequivocally that three fundamentals of teaching 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 learn to behave this way consistently, even under stress, when we have habits that are more authoritarian.

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 brainstem talk; old words and voice tones of control and disapproval arise from somewhere. Poof! The children's spirit snuffs out like a candle. Before I know it, I find myself trapped in battles of will, and I hear myself casting blame on others. This is not the teacher I am inside, but it's the teacher I am being, and the children see. I have lost my authenticity.

I want control. I want compliance. Yet exercising authority is the antithesis of teaching! It is not anywhere on that list. It's a paradox. When my children need teaching the most, my words and actions are unlike my expressed values. I have no integrity.

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

In times like these, I want a way to self-correct, because I am not receptive, in the moment, to anyone else's help. I want a handrail. 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.

I offer Enterprise Talk as a handrail to integrity and authenticity. It is a measurable, concrete delineation of rules for talking to children in times of difficulty and responding with effective positives. It is a guide to maintain the path you choose for yourself. — a way for you to practice expressing yourself to children without being only your old habits. Enterprise Talk helps you model, inform and respond positively to what you value.

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.

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.

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 until you fully acquire habits of talking of which you are proud.

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.

Enterprise Talk — 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.

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 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 with extrinsic positives. Extrinsic means coming from outside. We want children to do educative things because it is *intrinsically* positive. They keep doing it for inner reasons.

We cannot provide intrinsic rewards, but we can talk about them as existing in our minds. For example, *I am a teacher because I find satisfaction for me. I brush my teeth because I have found I feel better when I do it.* I listed as many words as I could find that described those inner satisfactions that keep people doing the difficult and the challenging. When I culled the list to those that applied most readily to children, I found they fit into four clusters.

ENJOYMENT

“It’s fun to do, isn’t it?”

pleasure ~ delight ~ happiness ~ thrill ~ joy ~ amusement ~ gratification ~ good feelings ~ savoring that inside ~ pride ~ satisfaction

COMPETENCE

“You did it!”

success ~ mastery ~ having the know-how ~ expertise ~ accomplishment ~ achievement ~ attainment ~ having a skill ~ able ~ capable

CLEVERNESS

“That’s tricky.”

new ideas ~ uniqueness ~ brainy ~ smart ~ intelligent ~ bright ~ witty ~ sharp ~ ingenious ~ quick ~ original

GROWTH

“You’re sure getting bigger!”

ready for new challenges ~ older now ~ choosing something new ~ 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 each of the clusters to create my response. *I sure enjoy painting, too! You are indeed a painter. It feels good to create something totally original, doesn’t it? You couldn’t paint like that last year!*

Initially, I found this difficult to do, 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 with smiles.

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, however. Nothing is that simple. Richard Boyattis 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. 20 or 30 minutes during the most difficult time of the day seems sufficient to yield a sample. Mark each direction and stick the tape onto a record chart. Try again another day to see if you can lower the number.

All nine are easy to tally: the prohibitions to decrease: directions, questions, and praise; the guides to increase: descriptions, narrations, subjective-talk, non-verbal recognition, intrinsically-phrased responses, and descriptive cue sequence. Those teachers, 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, your Being in the here and now.

Teachers 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 instant we have to recognize it and set it aside. Since emergent positive ways of being need nurturing, 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 *integrity* — actually being the teacher you say you are — and with *authenticity* — opening yourself honestly in each moment with children.

If you find it difficult, I can relate. It took me 4 years to learn these new habits.