

The influence of your words - How can your words help or hurt people?

Exhibiting Verbal leadership.

In this lesson the goal is to teach the kids that words have a great impact. Communication is essential to all human interaction. The most common means of communicating is through the use of words, which can be spoken as well in writing such as letters, emails and texting. A word is like a spark; it can start a raging and destructive fire just as easily as it can start a furnace that warms a home. In this lesson we will teach the kids that once their words are shared, they can't take them back. This is true for bad or hurtful words as well as good or helpful words. To share this lesson, you will need a small tube of toothpaste, a paper plate and napkins.*

Coach: Did anyone use words today? Did you speak to anyone? Did you write anything down? Did you text anyone?

Allow time for most or all of the kids to admit to using words during the day.

Coach: Cool, it looks like all of you did. Can you tell me some of the words you used?

Let the kids share some words or conversations.

Coach: WOW! That is a lot of words! I bet you know thousands of words. You are one smart team. Does anyone want to play a quick game? It's actually a race.

Select one child and let him or her know that they will go "first." Have your watch ready to time the race.

Coach: Ok <child's name> you are going first. I am going to time you. Are you ready?

Take out the tube of toothpaste and the plate.

Coach: We are going to see how fast you can squeeze all of the toothpaste out of this tube onto this plate.

Quickly hand the tube to the child. Look at your watch and say, "GO." The kids will cheer, and it might get messy. Let them laugh and have fun. It should only take 15-30 seconds to empty the tube. As soon as he or she is done, hit your watch and call the race.

Coach: Time! WOW! That was fast. It only took you <xx> seconds. OK. Who's next?

Pick a different child and look at your watch. As you hand the empty tube to him or her say:

Coach: OK <child's name> We are going to see how fast you can put it all back in the tube. Ready, GO!

The child will try to put the toothpaste back in, but it obviously will not work. Give him or her about 20-30 seconds to try, and then, stop him or her. Have your napkins handy.

Coach: That's NOT very easy to do is it? In fact, it is IMPOSSIBLE! Once the toothpaste is out of the tube you can't get it back in. Do you remember the words we just talked about? The ones you used all day today. Those words are just like this toothpaste. Once you say them and put them out there, you can't take them back. Many people still remember what you said to them today.

LESSON FIVE



Clean up the toothpaste but keep the plate nearby for the remainder of the lesson.

Coach: The BEST thing is that leaving your words out there is GREAT when you use kind and helpful words. Using mean and bad words is like squeezing the toothpaste all over your uniform. Yuck! What a mess; in fact it might stain and ruin your uniform. But, what if you put a little bit of toothpaste on your toothbrush? If you use it the right way and you are careful, toothpaste is something wonderful and helpful. It is the same with your words. When you go home tonight, I want you to think about your words before you use them. You can say your words to yourself before you say them out loud and make sure they are kind and helpful words - NOT mean and messy ones. Being nice is great, but being nice on purpose is what leaders do. Now, I want you to know that when your words do hurt someone there is something you can do about it. We can't take them back and act like it never happened, but we can admit we were wrong, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. We are going to spend some time talking about forgiveness in a few days. Does anyone have any questions?

Take a few moments to access comprehension and answer questions. Then move on to a summary statement or prayer that references and reinforces this lesson.

Reaffirm the APIVEO commitment with the team cheer.

Coach: Ok, are you ready? I want your parents to think we're crazy loud!

Start the cheer in a normal tone and get louder each time you ask the question.

Coach: Always play for who?

Team: Each other!

Coach: (louder) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (louder) EACH OTHER!

Coach: (really loud!) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (screaming loud!) EACH OTHER!

Coach: Stand up with authority and yell "[TEAM NAME] ROCK!

Following the cheer, I will always talk to each player after every practice to thank them for "bringing it" to practice. This only takes 10-15 seconds per player, but is worth its weight in gold. There are a few players that will be headed for the parking lot before the cheer is done, so you must be intentional and act fast. I typically get right in front of the player and, then, get on one knee, look him/her in the eye and mention something positive about his/her performance in practice and how glad I am that he/she is part of our team. You need to be quick to respect the parent's time, but you also need to be sincere.

Be intentional and remember, Always Play 4 Each Other!™

**There are many versions of this lesson available on the internet. For variations and other ideas you can search: "words are like toothpaste".*