



## Compassionate Language Guide for Children

A trauma-informed approach to everyday challenges

This guide offers compassionate, trauma-informed language to support children who are pushing boundaries, expressing needs through behaviour, or struggling with routine tasks. These phrases help create connection, safety, and understanding.

### 1. When a child isn't listening to 'no'

*Instead of: "How many times do I have to tell you? I said NO!"*

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Try:

- "It looks like that 'no' felt hard to hear. Do you want to tell me what you were hoping for?"
- "I can see you really wanted that. It's okay to feel disappointed — I'm here with you."
- "Hmm, sounds like your ears heard 'no' but your heart wanted 'yes' — let's take a breath together."

### 2. When a child doesn't want to wash hands/face

*Instead of: "Stop being difficult — go wash your hands now!"*

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Try:

- "Is the water too hot or cold? Let's make it just right together."
- "Sometimes washing feels annoying, doesn't it? Want to pick a fun soap or sing a silly hand-washing song together?"
- "Can I help you today? Some days our bodies feel more sensitive."

### 3. When they resist brushing their teeth properly

*Instead of: "Brush them properly or you'll get bad teeth!"*

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Try:

- "Teeth brushing can feel boring or tricky — let's try it together and make it fun."
- "Want to do it side by side and make silly faces in the mirror?"

- • “Hmm, are your gums sore? It’s okay to tell me — we can find a softer brush if you need.”

#### 4. When rules are ignored or broken

*Instead of: “You’re not listening again! Why can’t you just follow the rules?”*

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Try:

- • “Sometimes rules are confusing or feel unfair. Can we talk about what happened together?”
- • “Looks like something got tricky — want help understanding what the rule was for?”
- • “You’re not in trouble — I want to understand what you needed in that moment.”

#### 5. When a child resists bedtime

*Instead of: “Enough! Go to bed now or no stories!”*

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Try:

- • “Your body might not feel ready to rest yet — do you want to talk about what’s on your mind?”
- • “Bedtime can feel lonely or even a bit scary. I’ll stay close and we can do a wind-down together.”
- • “Let’s try a calming routine — which helps more: a story or a cuddle first?”

#### 6. When a child gets something ‘wrong’

*Instead of: “No, that’s wrong. Why don’t you ever pay attention?”*

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Try:

- • “It’s okay to get things muddled — learning is about trying, not getting it perfect.”
- • “You gave it a go — that’s the most important part. Let’s figure it out together.”
- • “Mistakes help your brain grow — want to try again together?”

#### Regulation Support Phrases

- • “I’m right here. You’re safe.”
- • “That was a big feeling — thank you for showing me.”
- • “I wonder if your brain and body are feeling a bit mixed-up right now — want to take a pause?”
- • “Let’s breathe together like blowing up a balloon... ready?”
- • “It’s okay to need help with this — I’m here.”



### **Encouragement for Adults and Children**

- We are all learning — children and grown-ups alike.
- It's important not to judge or criticise us while we learn.
- Being kind to ourselves helps our brains feel safe enough to grow.
- There's no such thing as perfect parenting or perfect behaviour — only connection, repair, and trying again.