

Let's Talk about...A NAC Accreditation Standard: *Teachers use positive guidance techniques that help children learn to make wise choices and control their own behavior.*

When children are given choices, several important developmental tasks are practiced. They learn how to make decisions that are healthy and appropriate. They practice problem solving skills. They establish a stronger sense of autonomy. They become less rebellious and more social when they feel empowered to affect their environment.

As we work with children, we have goals of helping them become independent learners, problem solvers and contributors to a healthy classroom environment. To help accomplish these goals, child care programs need to use a guidance approach that recognizes the power of choice. They need establish an environment with clear and fair classroom rules that are consistently and positively enforced. They guide children to make good decisions, practice making choices and problem solve many of the social situations they face.

Changing from a direction-giving adult to one who offers children choices to accomplish the same goal can be a bit of challenge. Here is an activity to help get you started. Consider the many types of directions that you give to children throughout the day. Write down examples of the commands you use on a sheet of paper. Once your list is finished, look at each command. Now rewrite it using a phrase that provides a choice for children. For example, consider changing "You need to clean up;" to "You can clean up the trucks or the blocks. Which one would you like to do?" Always make sure when you give a choice, it is acceptable to you.

Consistently implementing this in the classroom may take some time and practice. Listen to yourself throughout the day. Catch yourself giving commands and rephrase those commands into a sentence using choices. You will soon feel better, be more positive and at the same time, build a stronger bond with the children for whom you care. The children will also feel more empowered, less rebellious and will sense a more caring approach from you.

*Adapted by Colleen Tracy & Shelley Scheel from a *Professional Connections*© article written by Dr. Norm Ehmke, National Accreditation Commission Policy Board Member.