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## How to Use Key Phrases to Motivate Behavior Change

The way we ask for behavior change from our children can yield different results. Let's explore how to use verbal praise:

### Avoid Negative Commands

Negative commands are confusing to others because while it informs what *not to do*, it does not give instruction on what *to do*. By telling children what not to do, we put that idea in their head and they are more likely to do it. Negative commands can also cause adrenaline to skyrocket, making your child more nervous.

Example: "Can you play that new song on the piano?" or "Let's go for a walk", NOT "Stop eating so many chips".

### "You CAN" vs "can you?"

Saying "you can" rather than asking "can you" encourages and gives permission to the child to advance onto the next step of eating. It implies "I believe in you". It also avoids a "no" answer and power struggles. Providing a set choice helps keep the child engaged and feeling in control of the eating process.

Example: "You can choose to eat X or Y".

### Clarify the rules

Clarifying the rules helps tell the child what they can do rather than what not to do. Offering an alternative to what you want your child to do will help them learn the desired behavior.

Example: "We can eat ice cream after dinner", or "We have dessert after dinner"