



**SAY IT WITH SCRIPTS**  
**SAY IT WITH SCRIPTS**  
**SAY IT WITH SCRIPTS**  
**SAY IT WITH SCRIPTS**



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SCRIPTS, CHECK OUT THE PIONEERING WORK OF THE KARYN PURVIS  
INSTITUTE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND TBRI ([HTTPS://CHILD.TCU.EDU](https://child.tcu.edu)).

**Gentle and kind.**

**Use your words.**

**Listen and mind.**

**No hurts.**

## WHAT IS A SCRIPT?

- short phrases meant to direct our kids back to the behaviors we want to see
- easily remembered by the parent and the child
- can be used proactively and reactively
- leads to behavioral redos

# PROACTIVELY



While playing with my toddler, I pat the stuffed animal he's playing with and say "Gentle and kind."



I play barbies with my 7 year old and we practice the daughter asking the mother for something respectfully and disrespectfully (because that is a lot more fun!)  
"Are you asking or telling?"



With my 14 year old, I call a family meeting in which we talk about a recent challenge and we role play what's he'll say and what I'll say to better communicate. "Try that again with respect."

# REACTIVELY



My toddler throws his toy on the ground and I say, "Nope remember, gentle and kind. Try again" This initiates a redo. My toddler picks up the toy and puts it gently in the basket.



My 8 year old comes around the corner and demands I take her to the store to buy something. I turn to her and say, "Are you asking or telling?" This initiates a redo. She goes back around the corner, comes into the room, and says "Hey mom, I was wondering if we have time to run to the store today to buy something?"



My teen responds to my request that he take out the trash with an eye roll and words under his breath. I say, "Want to try that again?" This initiates a redo. I ask him again to take out the trash and this time he says, "Okay mom."

WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY?

## WHY IS THIS HARDER FOR OUR KIDS?

Lack experience being taught good social skills—scripts can teach them!

Have underdeveloped parts of their brain due to neglect—scripts can help them better process & follow through with what you are asking of them!

Have language delays—can help because scripts are short and easy to remember!

Are highly reactive, may be hypervigilant or stay in more regular states of flight, fight, or freeze—scripts help us use less words so we don't trigger our kids!

Some of our kids are really good at getting us into back & forth verbal arguments—logic doesn't work here, but scripts do!

# TIPS

## ● **MAKE THEM YOURS**

Personalize scripts for your family culture and language.

## ● **TEACH THROUGH PLAY**

We teach scripts proactively through play and conversations. For instance, play “right way, wrong way” role play or sit down with older kids for family meetings.

## ● **DISPLAY THE SCRIPTS IN YOUR HOME**

For new kids joining your family: consider having your scripts written out, placed around the home, make them the basis for the household rules, and go over them as a family when a new child first comes. Refer back to the images around your home in teachable opportunities.

## ● **START SMALL**

It will take awhile to get used to using your new scripts. Consider making a short list to start, writing them down on note cards, and placing them somewhere you'll remember to see them regularly.

## ● **CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME**

We don't use a new script for the first time or try to teach scripts during a meltdown or challenge. Your child isn't teachable in that moment, they won't understand what you're trying to get them to do, and the script won't work.

## ● **BEHAVIORAL REDOS**

Scripts lead to behavioral redo opportunities, which are really powerful, because they give the child a motor memory connection of the right way to do something.

Reminder  
Reminder  
Reminder  
Reminder



## **SCRIPTS AREN'T PUNITIVE!**

Scripts are not meant to be punitive. You want to simply remind children of the right behaviors and lead them to do it.



Scripts are meant to replace negative words we use when frustrated.

They're meant to keep connection with our kids, so watch your tone and posture when using them.

Be positive and encouraging when your kids do it right with verbal affirmations, high fives, etc.

## GOAL

Kids eventually stop themselves from doing the unwanted behaviors.



**Try that again with respect.**

• • •

WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when a disrespectful tone or word has been said by your child

WAYS TO ADAPT FOR OLDER KIDS

Hold up, try again.

# Gentle and kind.

• • •

## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when your child has become more physically aggressive than necessary

## WAYS TO ADAPT FOR OLDER KIDS

No hurts.





## Use your words.

• • •

### WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when your child is whining, fussing, or having a minor meltdown instead of using words to explain what they need

# Who's the boss?



## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when your child is becoming bossy, sassy, or trying to control the situation

## ANOTHER WAY TO SAY IT

Adults are in charge.





## Give me a whole sentence.

• • •

### WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when you are trying to grow language development in a child who is responding with only one word

# With permission and supervision

• • •

## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used to give children boundaries on what they can't do independently

## ANOTHER WAY TO SAY IT

Ask permission.  
Check with me.





# Are you asking or telling?

...

## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when your child has demanded something from you instead of asking respectfully



# Are you asking for a compromise?

• • •

## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used when your child is struggling with a transition or direction you have given them and they are showing you behaviors instead of asking for something with words

## ANOTHER WAY TO SAY IT

Work it out.

Make me a deal.





# Focus and complete your task.

• • •

## WHEN TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Used if you have a child who struggles with sustaining their attention on something or are good at wondering off task

NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW



To create a new family culture, you need a new language.

"THE CONNECTED PARENT" BOOK

NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW FAMILY CULTURE NEW

# BENEFITS OF USING SCRIPTS

Reduces frustration and keeps us from escalating conflict—by yelling, nagging, or threatening

Helps us remember what to say, gives us a quick easy phrase to pull out of our parenting toolbox

Replaces negative words we use when frustrated

Exposes our own personal challenges: having the last word, winning the argument, being right, etc. When we understand ourselves a bit better, we can be better caregivers

Keeps us connected to our kids—because it's more of a partnership response and less punitive

Helps us maintain our authority—because we aren't sharing it with them through the back and forth exchanges that so many of our kids can trap us in

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
FOR MORE INFORMATION  
FOR MORE INFORMATION  
FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Contact Us**

### HELPFUL LINK

[Free printable posters](#)

REACH OUT TO ASHLEY BENNETT,

DIRECTOR OF

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

[abennett@TheRestoreNetwork.org](mailto:abennett@TheRestoreNetwork.org)

### FURTHER READING

The Connected Child: chapter 5

The Connected Parent: chapter 3