**The Name, Verb, Paint Skill**

Pretend with me for a moment: You just purchased a new riding toy for your child. It requires assembly. You pull out all of the pieces and find the sheet with the printed directions. Imagine what would happen while constructing the toy if the directions read like this:

1. Don’t put part A on top of part B.
2. Don’t make a mess.
3. What did I say?
4. Are you listening to me?
5. Stop whining.
6. Don’t leave the tools all over the floor.

How are you feeling so far? Encouraged? Frustrated? Confident about how to assemble the toy?

Now think about how we sometimes talk to our children:

* “Don’t hit your sister.”
* “Don’t leave your toys on the floor.”
* “Don’t lean your chair back like that!”
* “Did you hear me?”
* “What did I say?”
* “Don’t make me pull this car over!”

A very helpful skill that I have learned through studying Conscious Discipline® is to teach children what **to** do. Dr. Bailey teaches that you will get more of the behaviors you focus on. She refers to this as the Power of Attention.

**If we want children to learn to behave appropriately, it requires us to clearly teach what the expected behavior looks like, sounds like and feels like.**

Young children have immature inner speech. They think in pictures, much like seeing a movie playing in their mind. (Adults, on the other hand, have a never-ending diatribe of words going through our minds.) The more the adults use words, gestures and visual pictures to paint clear pictures for children, the better children understand what is expected.

* “John, when you want your sister’s attention, touch her like this.”  
  *Demonstrate.*
* “Sue, pick up the puzzle pieces and put them in this box like this.”  
  *Demonstrate.*
* “Devon, keep your chair legs on the floor like this.”  
  *Demonstrate.*
* “I am going to pull the car over so we are safe.” *Once the car is pulled over, continue,* “Jena, reach over and pull the seatbelt strap out like this and then put it in the buckle.”

Think of one small, everyday behavior that often triggers you with one of your children. It could be leaving a bath towel on the floor, not hanging up a jacket, running through the house, etc. In your mind, picture what you want your child **to** do. Next, write down what to do with a clear command. State your child’s name, followed by a verb that tells the action you want him/her to do and then paint a clear picture of the expectation using words and gestures. In Conscious Discipline, we call this process **“Name, Verb, Paint.”**

Let’s say your trigger is Jamie sitting sideways at the dinner table and subsequently dropping food.

**Name:** “Jamie.”

**Verb:** “Turn your whole body to face forward…”

**Paint:** “…like this.” Demonstrate. “Your knees will be under the table and your smiling face will be pointing toward me.”