

Supporting Regulation: Declarative Communication

Adults use a lot of **imperative communication** with children. Imperative communication is usually a question, request, or demand where a response is expected. Children also use imperatives to have their needs met. This type of communication has some limitations:

- It limits the thinking a child does from the others' perspective, it limits the sharing of experiences and emotions, and it can be a stress trigger.

Sometimes, we must use imperative communication (ex. to get something done in a timely manner), and that is okay. **However...**

...Declarative communication is more open-ended. When you use declaratives, you:

- State or comment out loud what you know, feel, or think (opinions, predictions)
- Share your experience
- Are not waiting for a response (yet a response is welcome!)

A child who is exposed to more declarative communication may become a more declarative communicator ➡ The "dance" of social interaction will then become more enjoyable!

Here are some declarative sentence starters (and sample sentence endings):

- | | |
|--|---|
| ○ I'd like to know if... (I'll need a hat) | ○ I'm going to... (colour this picture) |
| ○ I wonder if... (it's lunch time) | ○ Let's... (see who is here today) |
| ○ I see... (your friends sitting nicely) | ○ I'm tired of... (walking around) |
| ○ I like... (watching you play) | ○ I'm guessing you... (are happy) |
| ○ I can't... (find your pencil) | ○ That is a... (warm jacket for winter) |
| ○ I want to... (eat lunch with you) | ○ Your... (shoes might trip someone) |
| ○ I went... (to bed when I was tired) | ○ You are... (trying so hard, hooray!) |

There are lots of other ways to add richness to an interaction! Let's not forget about:

- Gestures (pointing, shrugging shoulders, happy dancing)
- Facial expressions (raised eyebrows, scrunched nose, smiles and frowns)
- Voice intonation (think: slide whistle!), tone, volume
- Anticipation ("Oh oh!" "Oops!" "Hmmm...")

****When a child is distressed/dysregulated, slow down or stop talking altogether****

Here are a few specific examples: (Tip: Create your own table! Practice, practice, practice!)

IMPERATIVE	VS	DECLARATIVE
Instead of: "What did you do today?"		TRY: "I had fun at the park today"
Instead of: "Say goodbye to your teacher"		TRY: "Your teacher is leaving now"
Instead of: "Put on your coat"		TRY: "Looks chilly out - I'll need my coat"
Instead of: "What colour is that?"		TRY: "I like the colour you chose!"