

When Children Go to School, Parents Go, Too.

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THERE IS NO DENYING IT. When our children go to school, we go too. We may not be physically there. But, we are there, not so much in our children's classrooms of today, but in the classrooms we knew and experienced. And the joys and the heartaches of school life all come back.

Are we ready for the inevitable crises and disappointments, minor and major, that our children bring home from school? Do we know what to say and what to do? Or are we saying again what we heard when we were kids?

From what I hear from parents across the nation, we are not as ready as we would like to be. When our children come home worried and frightened, sometimes crying, it's hard on them, but it's also hard on us, too.

That's why I have written "**What Do We Say? What Do We Do?®: Vital Solutions for Our Children's Educational Success.**" It focuses on how-to's for problem solving the natural stresses and frustrations in the home and school relationship.

The questions the book addresses are on the minds of families everywhere... Among them-**Effort:** How can I help my child keep tackling hard jobs without thinking they are too tough to handle? **Motivation:** How can I help my child keep interested in learning and school and keep from saying those dreaded words, "I'm bored"? **Teamwork:** How can I help my child work cooperatively with others, and with me, too?

The book's framework uses what children say and do as "prompts." "Why do I have to do it? What can I do about it?". *As you read, think about how you would respond to these concerns, how using your own words, you would explain things differently.*

The Story of Angela: When Friends Aren't Friends Anymore

Angela has played with two friends everyday since they were in kindergarten together. They were always in the same classes. They played together at recess. They have been inseparable.

Today, however, something happened. Angela watched as her two friends went off at recess without her. From the other side of the playground, she could see them laughing. She left terrible. She must have done something awful, but she didn't know it was, and she didn't know what to do. She started crying. Her teacher saw her and asked, "What's the matter?" But, Angela was too upset to talk. Because she had never experienced this before, she didn't really know what was the matter. She could feel her whole self sinking. She wished she could evaporate right out of the playground.

When she got home, here's some of what she said and here's some of what her mom said.

"I Won't Go Back To That Classroom."

Angela, it is your class and it's where you have to go. It's just as much yours as it is anyone else's, including the other girls.

You'll have to be brave. It helps to think about all the things you do right and all the people who like you. Think about the friends you have had and how much you have like each other. Think about what you can do and are learning to do. Think about your art projects and your swimming and your bicycle.

Stop: Take a few minutes to make up some peptalk language of your own. One mom who manages a seafood market tells what happens to her when the market gets so busy she thinks that she can't handle another order. She just wants to leave the store. But then, she says to herself, "Sure I can. I can do it. Yes, I can do it." Think of a time when you needed a peptalk. Talk about the words of encouragement you give yourself.

The Story of Kevin: "It's Boring!"

When Kevin's parents went in for their parent-teacher conference this fall, his teacher said,

"Kevin just isn't motivated. He sits there and mutters and sometimes says aloud, 'I'm bored.' Even when he doesn't say it, he looks bored and doesn't participate. He often stares out the window. When he's working on an assignment and he doesn't get it right away, he gives up easily.

After dinner his parents told Kevin that they had been to his school. They told him about what the teacher said and asked him to comment on what he was hearing and to ask questions.

"Why Pick On Me? All The Kids Say They're Bored."

To get interested in something takes work. Most of us start out not being very interested, until we learn more about it or start to practice it more and more.

Getting better at something actually helps us get more motivated. When we first start doing anything, from reading to jogging, we're not very good at it. But, by doing it more and more, we build up our abilities and our interests.

The danger of saying over and over, “I’m bored,” is that it may keep us from finding out what we are really interested in.

Reminder: Interests lead to abilities and then to more interests. Most of us are not immediately artists or sports stars. We have to work at developing our abilities and as we do it, we become more and more interested. Lifelong interests get started that way. Many engineers and scientists tell about how they got started with erector and chemistry sets their parents brought home when they were little children.

To be the best parent we can be takes practice. And it’s not gained easily. We all need practice in what we can say and what we can do to build our children’s abilities to achieve and to tackle the problems that come home from school.

If along the way we have built our own abilities as adults, it’s no accident. We grow right along with our children. It’s a remarkable opportunity and it’s here for all of us.

What Do We Say? What Do We Do is designed to be like a talk with a friend. The situations are meant to be tried on for size. They may fit exactly or they may need some alteration to fit. The goal is to help our children develop resiliency and competence for life today and tomorrow. In each chapter are different school-related problems affecting younger children (grades K-3) and older children (grades 4-6). Through this book, we see that the everyday problems that come home from school are opportunities for teaching and learning:

A parent discussion guide to accompany the **What Do We Say?** book is available from the Institute: For a copy of the HSI publications list contact: The MegaSkills Education Center of the Home and Schools Institute, 1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 466-3633 Fax: (202) 833-1400 www.MegaSkillsHSI.org

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