



Working with Children in the Hospital Always Remember...

Words/Phrases to Avoid

Hurt	This term is negative, non-descriptive, and subjective.
Big girls/boys don't cry.	Informs children that crying is an inappropriate response to pain. Crying is a coping mechanism, so do not hold the expectation that a child will not cry.
Be a good boy/girl.	This gives the impression that they are bad if they do not cooperate.
I'm only looking. (If you're really about to poke)	Please don't poke a child if you've said, "I'm only looking." Instead say, "I'm looking now to find just the right spot." Then encourage family to provide comfort and alternative focus during the poke.
I'm sorry	Be careful about apologizing. Medical procedures are done in the patient's best interest; apologizing gives the impression that you have done something wrong.
I don't want to do this.	Starting this way can make patients and families feel uncomfortable.
Repetitive speech	Be aware of your words during procedures. Sometimes we say things like, "I'm sorry," or "It's okay" over and over without realizing it.
Medical terminology	Please see the "Simple Explanations for Kids in the Hospital" hand-out for examples of more appropriate descriptions of commonly used medical terms.

Keys to Success

One voice	During a procedure, identify one person to speak while everyone else remains quiet. This helps to create a more calming environment by reducing stimuli.
Comfort holds	Allow parent to hold child during invasive procedures such as starting an IV, a blood draw, or sutures in order to support the child physically, as well as emotionally.
Put tourniquet over shirt/gown/small piece of stocking net	This small change will remove one stressful component because the tourniquet will not be directly on the child's skin/hair.
Limit amount of staff in the room	If a blood draw or IV start can be carried out by one nurse/tech and a Child Life Specialist it will have a less of a negative impact on the child. Like using one voice, this also reduces environmental stimuli.
Encourage and congratulate	If you are the One Voice , point out a child's positive coping, "you're doing great taking deep breaths," "thank you for holding still so well."
Utilize pain reduction tools	Use topical anesthetics such as Gebauer's Pain Ease Spray/Ethyl Chloride, LMX Cream, or Toot Sweet (birth-6 mo) to minimize pain, when possible.
Give choices only when there is a choice.	Only give children available choices, such as "Do you want to take your medicine now or in five minutes?" Or "When it's time to get your IV do you want to sit on your mom's lap or on the bed by yourself?" Do not give choices that cannot be fulfilled, such as "Would it be alright if I give you your medicine?" or "I'd like to start your IV now, okay?"

