

SAY THIS, NOT THAT:

Words to Celebrate a Melancholic's Strengths

Words are powerful. The right ones at the right time can change a child's life for good. The trouble is that the wrong words can too.

As a parent, teacher, coach, or other grown-up, every word you say to a child will build them up or tear them down. The choice is yours... after all, every word you use is a word you choose.

Let's look at what to say (and what not to say) to a Melancholic child.

SAY THIS

1 *That was nice of you to notice. Your **sensitivity** makes you such a good friend.*

2 *I love seeing what you think up. You're so **creative!***

3 *Thank you for taking this situation **seriously**.*

4 *I trust you. You have always been **honest** with me.*

5 *I believe you could do this project solo since you **work so well independently**.*

6 *I'm impressed! What a **thorough** plan! You've considered all the details.*

7 *Thank you for hearing my concerns. You are a **great listener**.*

8 *I can tell you put a lot of time and effort into making it **excellent**.*

9 *You've been so **focused** during the study sessions for this exam. You're definitely prepared.*

10 *You have an **eye for accuracy**. Would you review this for me?*

11 *I can always count on you to be **on time**.*

12 *Do you want some extra **time to think** about that?*

13 *That was a big project. You tackled it **methodically** and it turned out great!*

14 *I want to be sensitive to your **schedule** this weekend before I make plans for us.*

15 *I admire how **committed** you are. Nothing seems to distract you from your goal.*

16 *How you approach your schoolwork is so **organized and well thought out**.*

17 *If anyone can **solve this problem**, you can.*

18 *I love how you're always trying to **make things better**.*

19 *You've proven yourself **trustworthy**, so you have my permission to go.*

20 *You two are such **great friends**. It's awesome that you've grown so close this year.*

There is no magic in the sample words and phrases I've provided. Look closely and you may notice that they coincide directly with the list of Melancholic strengths. Building up a child with your words is as easy as affirming the strengths they are wired with.

So, if you ever get stuck coming up with the right thing to say, simply tell a child, "I believe that you are so **(insert strength)**."

NOT THAT

Here are the kinds of words to avoid when speaking to a Melancholic child:

1 *Why are you crying? You can be overly sensitive sometimes.*

2 *Didn't you see that coming? You're usually more prepared than this.*

3 *Why do you always have to be so serious? Lighten up. I was only kidding.*

4 *I'm having a hard time trusting you.*

5 *This is a group effort, not a one-man show. You need to collaborate.*

6 *How much more time are you going to waste before you get started?*

7 *I'm surprised you would make such a careless comment. That hurt my feelings.*

8 *It's good enough. Let's just move on.*

9 *Chill out. How hard can the exam be?*

10 *Of course you had to find the one mistake in the whole document.*

11 *It's not a big deal if we're late.*

12 *I need an answer right now.*

13 *You made that harder than it had to be. You could have finished in half the time.*

14 *I know we were supposed to _____ today, but instead we are _____.*

15 *You're obsessed with that. Dial down the intensity.*

16 *Relax! You're supposed to be having fun.*

17 *Let's just pick something and try it—even if it might not work.*

18 *Enough is enough! You've been tinkering with that forever.*

19 *Rules are meant to be broken sometimes. Loosen up!*

20 *I don't see what's so hard about making friends. Don't you like any of the other kids in your class?*

You don't have to say something intentionally to tear down a child with your words. Anything that undermines or devalues the strengths they are wired with is likely to have a negative emotional impact.

Be on guard for words that may be twisting their strengths or criticizing (rather than coaching them through) their weaknesses.