

# SAY THIS, NOT THAT:

## Words to Celebrate a Phlegmatic'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 Phlegmatic child.

### SAY THIS

- 1 You are such a **kind and caring** classmate.
- 2 Thanks for always being so **accommodating**.
- 3 Your **quiet humor** and **quick wit** is one of my favorite things about you.
- 4 Your friends are lucky to know such a **great listener**.
- 5 Thank you for being **friendly** to our new student. You made her feel welcome today.
- 6 I'm impressed that you stayed so **calm**.
- 7 Traveling with someone as **happy** and **easygoing** as you is the best!
- 8 You're the kind of **caring leader** our team needs.
- 9 Would you help them **resolve** this?

- 10 That took longer than expected. Thank you for being **patient**.
- 11 You're always thinking about others. You have such a **generous** spirit.
- 12 Great job being **polite and well-mannered**. Talking to adults can be intimidating.
- 13 I admire you for showing **common sense** and leaving when you did.
- 14 I love that you're **willing to share** with your sister.
- 15 Thanks for being so **agreeable** about the plan for today.
- 16 You stayed busy all that time **by yourself**? That's fantastic!
- 17 You're always there when I need you. Thanks for being so **supportive**.
- 18 You're an **important part of the team**. We couldn't succeed without you.
- 19 Our family is grateful to have a babysitter as **reliable** as you.
- 20 You've been the most **consistent** player all season. It's great to know I can count on you.

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 Phlegmatic 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 Phlegmatic child:

- 1 *You never participate in class discussions. I can't even tell if you're awake.*
- 2 *Why don't you ever have an opinion of your own?*
- 3 *This is not the time for wisecracks. Stay on task.*
- 4 *I wish you cared as much about schoolwork as you do that video game.*
- 5 *You can't seem to finish anything on time.*
- 6 *Do you even care? Show some energy and emotion, please.*
- 7 *I'm tired of making all the decisions. You lead the way for once.*
- 8 *If you're going to be a team leader, you need to be more assertive.*
- 9 *We don't have all day to talk it over.*
- 10 *Come on! Keep up. You've gotta move faster.*
- 11 *If you don't watch out, people will take advantage of your kindness.*

12 *Speak up next time. Don't let them run all over you.*

13 *It's nothing to be worried about. Get out of your own head.*

14 *Share at your own risk. If your sister breaks it, you're not getting another one.*

15 *We should be out the door by now, and you're not even ready. Hurry up!*

16 *What have you been doing all this time? You haven't gotten anything accomplished!*

17 *Maybe you should worry less about others and take care of your own stuff.*

18 *If you don't choose, I'm just going to sign you up.*

19 *Don't you have anything planned for today?*

20 *You don't seem very motivated. Let's see some hustle!*

You don't have to say something mean 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.