

Speak With, Not At

Pair a clear expectation with a real opportunity for voice.

Under stress, repeated directions and explanations can crowd out participation. A shorter, two-way conversation can protect dignity without making the expectation optional.

FOUR MOVES TO TRY

01 Connect briefly

Regulate your voice and signal that the relationship remains safe.

02 State the expectation

Be specific and use one short sentence.

03 Invite a response

Ask a genuine question or offer two acceptable options.

04 Confirm the next step

Agree on what happens next and follow through.

TWO WAYS TO APPLY IT

YOUNGER CHILD

At cleanup, keep the expectation and ask whether blocks or cars should go away first.

TEENAGER

After a missed curfew, ask what happened before deciding together what the next step must address.

COACH THE CAREGIVER

Practice a short direction that leaves room for voice without offering a choice you cannot honor.

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Once a day, replace a lecture with a clear expectation, an appropriate invitation, and a confirmed next step.

REFLECTION

Am I opening a conversation or only delivering a conclusion?

SAFETY AND PRACTICE

Do not demand eye contact or negotiation during high distress. Respect communication and sensory differences; prioritize safety when risk rises.

AUTHORSHIP AND CONTEXT

Dr. Charles Pemberton, Ed.D., developed the original Clinical Perspectives materials for the FITT team while serving as Clinical Program Director at Omni Family of Services. This website adaptation is for general education; it does not state current Omni or FITT policy. Publication rights review is pending.