

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 8: Fact or opinion: staying friendly over different ideas

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage children to generalise the social thinking generated in the lesson. As we continually stress, children rely on our commitment to consolidate these skills. We urge parents, guardians and teachers to use the session topics and ideas as ongoing themes each week at home or in class. Here are a few practical ideas to teach children how-to deal with 'Facts' and 'Opinions' wisely and respectfully. Children can develop this necessary social skill, but it takes practice, patience and the consistent guidance of adults.



Modelling

Here's the moment the spotlight swings to us, the parents. Our children's behaviour has a lot to do with what we model and encourage on a day to day basis. Our children never stop watching and learning from us! Some children are permitted by parents, because they do it themselves, to indiscriminately voice their negative thoughts; "I don't like that" "You're wrong" "So what? I can do that too" "It's not like that" "You wouldn't know" "This tastes awful!" So, next time you hear such phrases from one of your children privately say, "Hey, when you don't like something or disagree with someone, it's not a good idea to keep telling everyone because it makes you look unfriendly." Children who have been granted this confusing freedom are far more likely to struggle with the 'Opinions' of others. Make no mistake, the way our kids present themselves to us, to friends, teachers and sports coaches will influence how much care and interest they'll receive from others.

Keep the developmental context in mind

By virtue of being young children are inexperienced and bound to make mistakes. As their self-image, confidence and place in the world become more secure they slowly but surely become less reactive to the different 'Opinions' of others. It takes time. At this early age accepting a different 'Opinion' can feel like they are letting go, or betraying a part of themselves. Keeping the developmental context in mind is useful in understanding the behaviour and makes it easier to remain patient.

Empathy

Teaching children how-to respond empathically underpins the higher order skill set of rationalising the 'Opinion' of another. In fact, the ability to show compassion and 'give a little grace' is a basic capacity that human beings expect from one another. To illustrate this, if your child's friend is convinced that their football team is 'the best in the world' an empathetic response would be, "I know how much you love your football team", or "Yeah, I feel the same way about my football team too!" This is more helpful than forcing them to accept that their 'Opinion' is not actually a 'Fact'. Explicitly teach your children how to be empathic. Have some fun and role-play a wide range of options!

Teach language that can be used

Teach your child how-to say something truthful, but protects feelings and friendships, such as-
"It's great that you think that."

"I'm pleased you like them."

"Your idea is different to mine, and that's okay."

"I've got a different idea. Let me tell you what I think."

"I see what you are saying, but I think differently about it."

"Hey, we could use both of our ideas!"

Saying, "sorry" matters!

A genuine "sorry" can rescue and repair so many situations that have become heated. Teach your children how to say it with a smile, a frown, a touch, a wink, a handshake, a rub on someone's arm or a hug. Coach your kids to understand that "sorry" may not always be accepted by another, but it's a powerful gesture to ease resentment and allow relationships to heal. "Sorry" shows that we made a mistake and our judgement was too quick.

Play, 'Simon Says, "It's a Fact"'

Ask your child to sit with you at the table or on the floor. Start by saying, "Simon says, 'having a cat for a pet can be fun,'" or, "Simon says, 'Cats are the best pets.'" If the statement is a fact, your child must stand up and sit down again. If the statement is an opinion, they must run to another room and back again. In the event of confusion, stop and discuss whether the statement can be proved or tested. Continue and have some fun while kids learn how to tell fact from opinion. Once they have mastered this, you might like to take this game to a new level. Now you might say, "Simon says, 'Tell me, without hurting my feelings, why cats may not be the best pets'."

'Fact' or 'Opinion' card set

Get hold of a blank set of playing cards. Split the deck in half. On one half write a 'fact' on each card. On the other half write an 'opinion'. Shuffle the deck and then, ask your child to draw a card. Their task is to identify whether the statement is a fact or an opinion before drawing another card. If you get three correct you get dessert! Feel free to use our statements from *Show me the Buzz* and *Do you know the Buzz?*

What do your children know about you?

Ask each of your children to state one 'Fact' and one 'Opinion' about you. Each time they are successful you have to return the favour by stating one 'Fact' and one 'Opinion' about them. We have a tip - keep it light and humorous!

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au