

WHAT to SAY

WithAll 

SHARING WHAT TO SAY WITH OTHER ADULTS IN YOUR CHILD'S LIFE

Thank you for taking the pledge to stop diet and weight talk around the kids in your life. As you're living out the pledge, you may notice other adults your child looks up to do not know the importance of their words about food, body, and exercise. You may notice some of them might be inadvertently saying harmful things to your kid or other kids.

Asking another adult to change how they talk to and around kids might feel tricky or uncomfortable. Here are a few simple tips and conversation starters for sharing What to Say with other adults and inviting them to join you in supporting your kid's health.

How to start the conversation



TIP

Share how important they are in your kid's life and keep the conversation about your kid's health. Remember, they care about your kid too, and the goal is to have them on your team and to put the conversation in the light of helping your kid be happy and healthy.



TIP

Be humble – share how you are still learning in this area as well. Try not to lecture or use a condescending tone.



TIP

Think about a time you were corrected or encouraged to change your actions (either it was received by you well or poorly). If well, what did you like about how they approached you? If not well, how do you wish they did it differently? Take this with you as you enter the conversation.



WHAT to SAY

Here are a few sample templates* you can use as an email, note, or conversation starter to share our What to Say Introduction tools with adult role models in your kid's life. These one-sheets can be given directly to the adult or used for further conversation.

Family or Other Mentors

Hi [Mom/Dad/Name],

[Insert however you learned about the pledge and What to Say].

I have learned so much about food and body and how the words we say affect kids' health that I had no idea about. Since you're such an important part of [kid name(s)] life, I wanted to share it with you too so you can help me give [kid name(s)] the lifelong gifts of a positive relationship with food and appreciation for their body.

Love,

[Name]

A Teacher

A great opportunity to share this with a teacher could be your child's conference.

Dear [Name],

Thank you for all you do for [kid name(s)].

[Insert something here that you or your child appreciate about the teacher].

[Insert however you learned about the pledge and What to Say]

I have learned so much about food and body and how the words of the adults they look up to affect kids' health that I had no idea about. Since you're such an important part of [kid name(s)] life, and I know you care about all the kids you teach, I thought it might be helpful to share a resource that WithAll created specifically for teachers.

Thank you for all you do!

[Name]

A Coach

A great opportunity to share this with a coach could be at the start of the season.

Dear [Name],

Thank you for all you do for [kid name(s)].

[Insert something here that you or your child appreciate about the coach or what you are looking forward to in the season if it's a new coach].

[Insert however you learned about the pledge and What to Say]

I have learned so much about food and body and how the words of the adults they look up to affect kids' health that I had no idea about. Since you're such an important part of [kid name(s)] life, and I know you care about all the kids you coach, I thought it might be helpful to share a resource that WithAll created specifically for coaches.

Thank you for all you do!

[Name]

A Doctor

A great opportunity to share this with your child's doctor could be at their annual well check.

Dear [Name],

It is great seeing you again.

[Insert however you learned about the pledge and What to Say]

I have learned so much about food and body and how the words of the adults they look up to affect kids' health that I had no idea about. Since your words about my kid's health are extremely important to me and [kid name(s)] I wanted to share with you a resource they have specifically for health care providers so we can partner in protecting [kid name(s)] health and well-being.


Thank you for all you do!

[Name]


**The prompts provided might need to be adjusted based on the age of your child or relationship of the adult role model. Our goal is to give you a starting point to find the words that work best for your situation.*


How to respond in the moment if an adult says something harmful*


We've all been there. Someone says something unhelpful or harmful around your kids, and you might not be sure how to respond. Although every situation is different, here are a few helpful tips for navigating these situations.


 **TIP** It is entirely fair to get angry or emotional in the moment since this is a topic that affects all of us on a deep level. The same is probably true for the person you're talking with as well! Trust your gut if it is right for you to discuss this now or later when everyone has cooled down, or (maybe more importantly) when kids are not listening.


Below are some ideas of how to pivot harmful conversations. Every situation is different so trust your gut on if these are the right fit for you. Have a specific question? Contact us at whattosaynow.org/question.

 **TIP** Were you unable to respond in the moment? That's ok! If you're comfortable, try to have a conversation with the adult later using the tips above for "How to Start the Conversation."


 **WHAT to SAY** *If they are commenting on someone's body and seemingly inviting you to comment as well.*
> "We/I actually try not to comment on other people's bodies."

 **WHAT to SAY** *If they are encouraging physical activity to "make up" for all the food you just ate.*
> "I'd love to go for a walk, but it is because I enjoy walking and spending time with you."
> "I'm not interested right now, and I like moving because it is enjoyable...if I think about it as canceling out calories, to me it feels kind of sad, you know?"

 **WHAT to SAY** *If they are labeling certain foods as "good" or "bad."*
> "Actually, all foods have a place. For us it is about balance."

 **WHAT to SAY** *If a fellow adult role model is commenting on portion sizes or what you or a child eats.*
> "For us, sometimes we want more food and sometimes we want less food...we listen to our bodies."

How to talk to your kid after something harmful is said

 **TIP** You know your kid best, and what you say will depend on your kid's age. What to Say aims to reduce shame and stigma around food and weight, so be sure that you are not making it more uncomfortable for your kid when you address an uncomfortable situation. It's important to make sure they know what was said is corrected but trust your gut in how to bring this up. Here are a few respectful yet correcting conversation starters* for connecting with your kid after an uncomfortable situation.

*The prompts provided might need to be adjusted based on the age of your child or relationship of the adult role model. Our goal is to give you a starting point to find the words that work best for your situation.



When talking with your kid, be sure to ask questions and listen to how they are feeling about what happened (examples below).



If a loved one comments on weight or food choices

- > “I heard [person] comment about your [weight/food choices]. I’m sorry [person] seems to feel other people’s food and bodies is their business.”
 - *How did what [person] said make you feel?*
- > I want you to know that what I think matters –the most important thing of all—is how YOU feel overall, about your body, and about the food you eat.
 - *How do you feel about your body?*
 - *How do you feel about the foods you eat?*
 - *How do you feel overall?*
 - *Is there anything I can do to support you? Because I think you’re fantastic... just the way you are right now.*



If a coach or doctor shares concern with your child about their weight or food choices

> “I’m sorry that [doctor/coach] commented on your [weight/food choices]. Some people believe outside measures determine health, but we know that is not true. What they said was not good advice. We all, even coaches and doctors, make mistakes sometimes.

- **If in relation to sports performance:**
“Instead, let’s focus on practicing and improving our skills and having fun playing.”
- **If in relation to a doctor’s recommendations:**
“Instead, let’s focus on some fun activities and meals that we can all share as a family to feel good and support our bodies and minds—just as they are.”

We hope these tips and conversation starters are helpful for sharing What to Say with others so your kids can be surrounded by adult role models protecting their health and well-being when it comes to food, body, and exercise.

Have a question we didn't address here?

Submit it at whattosaynow.org/question, and we'll work to get your answer.

Want to learn more?

Visit www.whattosayNOW.org and sign the What to Say pledge to receive more information on these topics, packaged in simple, easy-to-digest emails.

Thank you for all the ways you love and support the kids in your life.

Your words mean so much to them and your desire to support their health and well-being means the world to them and us.



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