



Implicit Demands in Communication

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Demands are **Requests or Expectations** **placed on one's:**

Actions: *“Line up at the door.”*

Mind: *“You should feel ashamed.”*

Identity: *“Good students share their things.”*



General Recommendations

Seek consent/buy-in:

“I have an idea if you’re interested.”

Reduce insistence and allow dissent:

Make time and space for their input, and make it clear they are free to disagree with you. Besides, noticing different things than you is the beginning of critical thinking and discussion.

Active listening, no agendas.

Remember, when they feel better, they do better.



Imposed Consequences

Sanctions that exceed natural consequences, like punishments, threats, shaming, and even rewards.

“Now I can’t give you a gold star.”

If the child has already experienced a natural consequence, let it do its work.

Adding more sanctions is easily interpreted as punitive, cancelling out the learning from the natural consequences.



Judging

Giving an opinion that elevates or diminishes another.

'Absolute' words: Always, never

Blaming: *“This is all your fault.”*

Value-laden words: Silly, rude, lazy, useless, selfish, etc.

“Why do you play silly video games all the time.”

Qualify, soften, or omit opinions. *“That was interesting.”*



Leading & Loaded Questions

Using an assumption to lead the other's response, or to put them in a lose-lose situation.

“Why’d you attack the other student?”

The child must either accept the use of the word ‘attack’ or object to it, both of which portray them as defiant.

Be neutral & objective, and check in for understanding:

“I heard there was a disagreement, is that correct?”



Precommitment

Projecting an outcome that hasn't happened yet.

“Come outside with us, you’ll love it!”

“You’ll never go to college if you keep acting like this.”

**It can help to describe or predict with less certainty,
and even provide an exit strategy.**

“It might be fun outside, and if not, you can go back inside.”



Emotions as Expectations

Use of emotions to agitate, invigorate, or coerce.

Word choice: Hope, love, disappointed, concerned, worried, excited

"You'll regret doing that."

"I was hoping you'd come with me."

"That's so sad to your backpack was torn."

Describe situations neutrally or intellectually:

"What do you think will happen?"

"Any chance you'd go with me? You're always invited, of course."

"It's unfortunate the backpack was torn."



Sniping

**Subtle, passive aggressive statements of frustration,
that wound deeply if heard.**

“Oh, you’re joining us today?”

“Why can’t you do that all the time?”

These statements are best left unsaid.



Adversarial

Taking a contrarian position, good or bad.

Playing the devil's advocate: Warning them, dashing the dream.

They lament, you reassure.

“Oh, don't worry, it's not that bad.”

“No, the other students don't hate you.”

Leveling, normalizing, erasing difference.

“Everyone experiences that.”

It is better to listen than contradict them.

“That's understandable,” & “Why do you think that?”



Comparing

Using comparison in a coercive way.

Positive other: *“The other students aren’t acting like this.”*

Medical Model: *Built on a foundation of deficits.*

Evidence-Based: *Normed, faceless, diluted groups.*

Only measure the child against themselves:

“Can I tell you one cool way I’ve seen you grow?”

“Reading didn’t seem very hard for you yesterday. Is that correct?”



Ambiguity

Abstract or implied knowledge for which the student is accountable.

Often use vague, abstract, value-laden words:

“You’re not making respectful choices.”

The danger is that it’s too easy to move the goalposts.

No matter what they do, they're never good enough, they can't win.

Hidden Curriculum: *Unsaid social and school procedures that aren’t taught (well), and are assumed to be absorbed from observation, such as how to turn homework in late, or how the lunch line works.*

Teach situations in fine detail, and be on the lookout for students hiding procedures they don’t know. *Don't grill them, just assume it & teach it.*



Zero Sum

When an adult must win, often with a polarized view of themselves as a hero/victim and student as a willful perpetrator.

They use themselves as a measuring stick.

Prone to sniping, and bent on justifying some bitterness within.

Won't recognize the student's progress unless perfect.

Will reject apologies.

"I told you so!"

"I shouldn't have to explain myself to a child."

"Well, if they want to fail, they can. They don't need my help"

"I had it worse and I'm okay."

"Hey, I'm just trying to help."



Paradigm

Remember, PDA and other neurodivergent children are in a vastly different world than most others, even if you're neurodivergent, too.

Mentally extend them the empathy and freedom to exist that adults have:

“Of course I’ll explain, I can’t expect you to do it without knowing why.”

“At the end of the day, I just want you to feel okay.”

Active listening: Have a conversation with them (at a good time) where you ask a few neutral questions, and otherwise let them speak, and speak, and speak some more. Bring none of your own agendas, reasons, suggestions, reassurances, etc., put those in your pocket and just listen! To end, thank them and tell them you want to think about everything they said.