



Self-Descriptions vs. Behavior Descriptions

What's the difference and why does it matter?

Behavior Descriptions are narrations of your child's actions. They state exactly what your child is doing in that very moment.

Benefits

- allows child to take the lead in the play and helps caregivers to follow along
- demonstrates caregiver interest and attention to child
- helps caregivers to model good speech and teach child new concepts
- communicates approval of child behavior
- assists child in sustaining attention to task

Self-Descriptions are statements where caregivers:

- comment on their own activity in the play
- share their thoughts and feelings related to the play, activity, or conversation

Benefits:

- older children may feel uncomfortable if their every action is described
- balancing attention between caregiver and child behaviors helps to share this spotlight and makes play more interesting, relaxed, and authentic
- older children enjoy hearing their caregiver's problem solving, opinions, and interests in the play

Caregivers are encouraged to reciprocate their use of Behavior Descriptions and Self-Descriptions in the play as demonstrated below:

You're sorting the Legos into piles.	<i>Behavior Description</i>
I'll help you look for yellow ones.	<i>Self-Description</i>
You put the big blue ones over here.	<i>Behavior Description</i>
The blue ones are my favorite.	<i>Self-Description</i>
You're putting all of the heads together.	<i>Behavior Description</i>
I think I might need one of those heads in a minute.	<i>Self-Description</i>