

# Language of Listening® CAN DOs

Welcome to the third of three resources that equip you with coaching tools to maintain your emotional connection with your child and STILL be the one in charge!

As parents, we ALL want to see behavior we LIKE from our children. To ensure that happens, we may turn to punishment to control our children's behavior if nothing else works. Language of Listening® allows you to swap out punishments for CAN DOs that work. This tool helps your child find healthy ways to meet their NEEDS for growth and start managing their own behavior.



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In order to let go of punishment, you begin with the first coaching tool of Language of Listening® called **SAY WHAT YOU SEE® (SWYS)**, making sure to say what your child WANTS. Next, you can state the boundary (if needed) in a matter-of-fact tone and then turn it over to your child who will either tell you more about their situation or offer their own solution. You do this by simply saying:

**“Must be something you CAN DO.”**

If your child’s solution is something you LIKE, great! You point out their problem-solving ability as a **STRENGTH**. If they can’t think of a solution or the solution they offer doesn’t work for you, you can offer **CAN DO** solutions of your own until you find something that works for you BOTH.

This process creates win-win solutions that put you and your child on the same side. Imagine holding your boundary WHILE empowering your child to find a solution. That’s what’s possible with **CAN DOs** as the examples in this booklet demonstrate.

*(Additional **SWYS** phrases and **STRENGTH** examples can be found in our other two booklets that you can purchase to complete your set of three Language of Listening® resources.)*

## What about those situations when what your child wants is not clear or possible?

One of the most important steps in finding a win-win solution is uncovering the NEEDs your child is already meeting through their behavior. When you know which of the Three Healthy Needs for Growth your child is meeting, you have a clear path to a solution because, even if it's not exactly what your child wants, what will work will be something that meets those same NEEDs. And the best part? Not only are you helping your child get their NEEDs met but you are equipping them to meet those NEEDs for themselves in the future. All of this while only allowing behavior you LIKE.

In order to ensure you are focused on mutual solutions and meeting NEEDs with CAN DOs you can remember this phrase:

**“Don't look for blame, look for solutions.”**

Keeping blame and judgments at bay is so much easier when your focus is on NEEDs. Then, moving on from the NEEDs directly to solutions is the way to go.

In the following pages, you'll find the Three Healthy Needs for Growth (Experience, Connection, Power) and some typical childhood behaviors that meet those NEEDs. Behaviors you probably don't like are paired with those you probably do like to provide you with ideas for CAN DOs that can meet your child's needs in ways you LIKE.

# EXPERIENCE

## Behaviors you probably don't like:

Acting silly  
Climbing on furniture  
Drawing on the walls  
Eating messy food with fingers  
Hitting or kicking for fun  
Jumping on the couch  
Getting into things  
Playing with food  
Pushing or shoving in play  
Running indoors  
Screaming indoors  
Shouting or making loud noises  
Splashing water out of the tub  
Throwing things  
Wiggling or fidgeting

## Behaviors you probably like:

Acting playful  
Climbing trees, playground equipment  
Drawing or painting on big paper; chalk on sidewalk, etc.  
Eating finger food  
High five; hitting or kicking a bop bag; playing soccer, etc.  
Jumping on a trampoline  
Exploring, experimenting, etc.  
Preparing food  
Pushing friends on swings, merry-go-rounds, etc.  
Running, racing, playing tag outdoors  
Squealing joyfully outdoors  
Singing; humming; whistling; playing musical instruments  
Splashing water in a pool or bucket outdoors  
Playing catch with balls, stuffed animals, etc.  
Wiggling feet; twiddling thumbs; playing with fidget toys, etc.

# CONNECTION

## Behaviors you probably don't like:

Arguing or talking back  
Attention-getting  
Bragging  
Clinging  
Hiding away (so you will come find them)  
Hitting for attention  
Interrupting or tugging at your clothes  
Repeating the same thing over and over  
Running away (so you will go after them)  
Sibling rivalry  
Shadowing you  
Spending too much time on screens (connecting with virtual world or friends)  
Wrestling  
Yelling to be heard

## Behaviors you probably like:

Communicating clearly; discussing  
Asking; sharing or showing treasured items  
Sharing accomplishments; showing you their STRENGTHs  
Holding your hand; hugging  
Playing peek-a-boo or hide-and-seek games  
High five; gentle touching or patting  
Handing you a note; using a pre-arranged secret signal  
Making their point in words or drawing; making a recording  
Racing; running to you; asking to play chase  
Spending time alone with you; playing family games  
Helping; doing what you do; doing things for you and others  
Spending time playing with friends, out in nature, observing others, or reading books  
Arm wrestling, thumb wrestling, playing team sports, etc.  
Talking; engaging in conversation; holding up a sign that says what they want to say

# POWER

## Behaviors you probably don't like:

Acting stubborn  
Bossing  
Challenging your rules  
Demanding  
Fighting  
Hitting or kicking people  
Name-calling (defensive reaction)  
Playing violent or scary games  
Putting others down (to build self up)  
Running away  
Screaming in your ear  
Showing off  
Spitting on things, people, the floor  
Throwing breakable things  
Whining  
Yelling angrily

## Behaviors you probably like:

Standing up for themselves; demonstrating flexibility  
Managing or controlling themselves; bossing their toys  
Making rules together; making their own rules; deciding  
Asking; speaking up  
Finding solutions; handling situations themselves  
Hitting or kicking a bop bag, tree, etc.; stopping themselves  
Saying what they don't like; setting personal boundaries  
Playing challenging or educational games  
Building self up by gaining skills (arts, individual sports, etc.)  
Racing; being the leader; going first  
Screaming into a pillow; calming themselves down  
Performing dance shows, magic shows, etc.  
Spitting in the sink, toilet, or outdoors  
Throwing toys in a basket; throwing balls, etc. outdoors  
Telling you what they wish or want; handling disappointment  
Yelling outdoors; growling like an animal; calming themselves down

## When using CAN DOs be sure to use ALL 3 Language of Listening® tools: SAY WHAT YOU SEE®, CAN DOs and STRENGTHs.

If “Must be something you CAN DO,” is met with a blank stare from your child, you can offer CAN DOs to help them along. When that’s the case, you can draw on your own creativity or refer to the above NEEDs lists and the following 100+ CAN DO suggestions that are paired with dozens of SWYS examples.

To demonstrate how the three coaching tools work together, the first five CAN DO examples also include STRENGTHs you can point out when your child succeeds.

Ready? Here we GO!

## Offer CAN DOs when...



## ...you want them to listen/do something

It's important to you to tell me your idea, and I'm busy on the computer. You really want me to know! Must be something you CAN DO so I can finish this report right now and still get to hear your idea.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can draw me a picture of it/write it down.

You can record it on my phone.

You can grab your idea, tuck it in your pocket, and tell it to me when I'm finished.

### POSSIBLE STRENGTHs:

Considerate

Creative

Know what works for you

Patient

## ...you're in the car

You're unbuckling your seatbelt. You want to have fun, not be stuck in the car! Must be some way to have fun and stay buckled!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can spot all the blue cars.

You can look out the window and see if you can find a horse, a cow, and a truck (or city items like a dog, bird, bike, etc.).

You can look at a book.

You can tell me a joke or a story.

You can make up a song.

### POSSIBLE STRENGTHs:

Creative

Blue-spotter, animal-finder, etc.

Imaginative

Know how to entertain yourself

Know how to find something fun to do

Know how to keep yourself safe

## ...you're out shopping

You're sitting right on the floor. You feel tired! You want to go home. Must be some way we can make this grocery trip feel more doable so we can finish quickly and get you home!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can sit in the shopping cart/trolley.

You can help choose what we buy for lunch.

You can chose a snack.

You can help me find the... (biggest apple, yellow can with a C on it, etc.).

You can watch for when the aisle is clear so we can roll faster!

### POSSIBLE STRENGTHs:

Apple-finder, can-spotter, etc.

Helpful

Know what you LIKE/WANT/NEED

Noticer

## ...they want something they can't have

You're grabbing the toy, and it belongs to someone else. You really want to play with it, and they get to decide. Hmm, must be something you CAN DO.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can ask if you can play with it with her.

You can ask if you can play with it when she's done.

You can offer her your toy to play with and ask to play with hers.

You can let her know you just want to play with it, not take it home.

You can figure out a way to get one of your own.

### POSSIBLE STRENGTHs:

Clear communicator

Know how to share

Problem-solver

Respectful

## ...they want something they can't have

You're SO MAD you can't have it you're hitting me! You just want to hit something, and I'm not for hitting. Must be something you CAN DO to get your anger out without hurting anyone or anything!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can hit this pillow, then we can find something you CAN have.

You can stomp like a dinosaur and roar.

You can go to your room and see if you can find something to help you calm down there.

You can show me how mad you are by drawing it on this paper!

### POSSIBLE STRENGTHs:

Expressive

Flexible

Found a way to get the mad out without hurting anyone/thing

Know how to calm yourself down

Know what you WANT/NEED

## ...they want something they can't have

Seems like you love magazines. You wish you could have one everytime we come shopping, and I only buy them on special occasions. Must be something you CAN DO to keep up with the new issues!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can add a subscription to your wish list.

You can save your pocket money and buy them yourself.

You can trade magazines with a friend.

You can schedule a trip to the library and look at the new ones there.

You can help me choose something from our shopping list while you figure out a solution.

## ...they're potty training

Seems like you're busy playing and don't want to stop to go pee. You wish you never had to take a potty break, and your body keeps making pee about every hour. That's just how bodies work. Hmm... Must be something you CAN DO to keep your pants dry without feeling interrupted all the time!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can find a stopping place, go pee really fast, and come right back.
- You can take your toy with you.
- You can bring the potty in here so it's close by (if you have an easy to clean floor and portable potty).
- Next time, you can try peeing first before you start to play.

## ...you see them trying to cooperate

(You made that clear!) You really don't like being told what to do. It doesn't sound like emptying the dishwasher is the problem, you just want to be your own boss. Must be something you CAN DO to make that work for both of us.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can empty it now on your own and tell me when you are done.
- You can decide when to empty it so it fits best in your day.
- Sounds like you are ready to take on more responsibility. Tell me your plan for managing it yourself without a reminder.
- You can make a chart (or chore cards, etc.) so you can manage yourself, and I can see your progress.

## ...they don't want to leave/say goodbye

You're hiding behind the door. You don't want to leave your friend's house. You want play until you feel ready to go. We leave in five minutes. Must be something you CAN DO to feel ready.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

What's one last thing you need to do to feel ready to leave?

You can find your own stopping place, race each other to clean up, then wave goodbye from the car.

You can play a goodbye-hello game and end in a big hug!

You can come here for a cuddle.

## ...they don't want to leave/say goodbye

(You're telling me) you're not ready to leave the park yet. It's so fun you want to stay right here all day! And it's time to go. Hmm, must be something you CAN DO to keep having fun all the way home.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

Looks like the slide is your favorite. You can do one more slide, then YOU can take ME to the car.

You can choose a fun way for us to leave the park.

We can race to the car like tigers or maybe bears.

You can climb on my back for a fireman's lift home.

## ...you want them to be careful

(You are asking if it's okay with me that you climb up that tree.) You checked for rocks underneath and think it will be safe. The ground is safe, the branches aren't. Must be something else you CAN DO to have fun here.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can climb the rock pile.

You can look around for another challenge that might be fun.

You can wait until we get home and climb the tree in our yard that we both know is safe.

You can ask those kids if they'd like to play tag with you!

## ...you want them to be careful

Sounds like you think you're ready to walk to school on your own, and I'm not okay with that. Must be some way to get you to school in a way that works for both of us.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can walk with your big brother.

I can help you cross the busy road, and then you can walk by yourself.

I can walk a little ways behind you, and you can pretend you're on your own to practice!

For now, when we walk together, you can show me all the ways you are staying safe.

## ...they had a bad day at school

Sounds like you wish you didn't have to sit next to Bobby. The seats are assigned until June. Must be something you CAN DO so you can feel comfortable at school!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can ask your teacher to move you.

You can be clear with Bobby you don't want to be pinched anymore.

You can share a treat with Bobby to try to make friends.

You can let me know if it's still a problem after a week, and I can talk to the teacher.

## ...they're struggling with homework

(You're telling me) you don't know what to do first. You want to make sure this project turns out the way you want! Must be something you can do to help you figure it out!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can experiment.

You can make a mock-up to see what might work.

You can call your friend to ask how they did it.

You can ask around for ideas and see what sounds best to you.

You can ask the teacher if they have time to talk with you about it at recess.

## ...they feel like giving up

You're just in a heap on the floor. Your whole body feels droopy, and you're showing me! You just want to give up! You want this to be over, and oh no! There's still more to do. Must be something you CAN DO to get through it!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

We can both walk around with our arms drooping down! We can moan, too, if that would help!

I can carry you to your bed for a rest/break.

You can try hiding under the covers for a while and see if that helps.

You can let me know what you need help with.

## ...you're at the playground

You've both got your hands on it. You both want the same swing. Two kids, one swing! Must be something you CAN DO to both get what you want!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can work out a way for you both to play (one can push, the other swing, etc).

You can do "Eeny, meeny..." to decide who goes first.

One of you can find another thing to do while the other swings.

You can wait your turn with me.

## ...they're feeling impatient

You are kicking the chair. You hate waiting so much! Feels like it's never going to happen! Kicking the chair is not okay with me. Must be something else you CAN DO to express how frustrated you are!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can draw a picture about it while we wait (or draw how you feel or everything you want to kick, etc.).

You can play a game with me to pass the time more quickly.

You can kick the tree outside (or a ball, balloon, etc.).

## ...they're feeling impatient

(You're saying it over and over again.) You like ice cream, and you don't want to wait. You want it now! Must be something you CAN DO to handle the waiting!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can put out the bowl and spoon right where you want them so you know you'll have it straight after dinner.

You can tell me just how you want your ice cream.

When it's time, you can be the one to dish it out.

You can go play with your toys until everyone is finished eating.

You can make a sign to put up on the fridge to tell everybody how much you like ice cream and don't like waiting!

## ...they are fighting with their siblings

She threw your car, and you didn't like that. You hit her, and she didn't like that! Hitting is not okay with me. Must be something else you CAN DO to let her know you don't want your toys thrown around!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You could have a do-over and let her know with words instead of hitting how much you didn't like that.

You can keep your toys in your room to keep them safe.

You can help her find something else to throw instead (if she's is a younger sibling).

## ...they are fighting with their siblings

You took something that belongs to him. That's not okay. You didn't ask first because you were sure he'd say no. You wanted him to say yes. Must be something you CAN DO so he will want to say yes next time.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You could try a do-over by giving it back and then asking.

You could say sorry and offer him one of your toys to play with.

You could ask if there is something he wishes you would say yes to.

## ...they are fighting with their siblings

Seems like you're wondering what it would be like if you never had a brother, and he'll always be your brother. Must be something you CAN DO to feel like an only-child sometimes.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You could write a story/draw a picture of what your life would be like as an only child.

You could spend some time away from him by playing outside.

We could schedule some special time just for us.

## ...they are aggressive

You are hitting me. That's not okay with me. Must be something you CAN DO to make your point without hitting me.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can hit the couch then come back and tell me how angry you are.

You can let me know with words or hugs that you need my attention.

You can show me how strong you are by flexing your muscles for me!

Before you feel like hitting, you can tell me if you need some snuggles.

You can tell me what you want so I can help you find a CAN DO that works for us both.

You can draw me a picture of how you feel.

## ...you and they are frustrated

There's marker on the wall! You want to draw something, and walls aren't for drawing on. Must be something you CAN DO.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

We can tape some paper up, and you can draw on that using crayons instead.

I can cut you a BIG piece of paper off our roll to draw on, then we can hang it in your room.

You can use these washable markers to draw in this notebook.

You can make some BIG drawings with chalk outside on the sidewalk (driveway, fence, trees, etc.).

## ...you and they are frustrated

You're playing, and your room still has toys on the floor that belong on the shelf. Must be something you CAN DO to make sure everything is cleaned up before supper!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can ask for help.

You can put them all in a box first and put that on your shelf.

You can put them on your shelf really quickly, then play with them there until I call you for supper.

You can play for five more minutes and then clean up all the toys before supper.

## ...you and they are frustrated

(You're telling me) you're not going to budge until I listen to you. You want to be heard. And I'm in the middle of speaking with your sister. Must be something you CAN DO.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can sit on the floor beside me until I finish talking, then zip my mouth closed so you can talk.
- You can go with your dad and talk to him about it.
- You can write/draw it out while you're waiting.
- You can record it on my phone for me to listen to when I'm finished here.

## ...screen time is over

You've had a five-minute warning, and you're still watching. Looks like it's hard to stop, and your time for today is up. Must be something you CAN DO to stay within the rules.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- I can turn it off for you today, and you can try again tomorrow to find a stopping place and turn it off on your own.
- You can use tomorrow's screen time today and play outside tomorrow during screen time instead.
- You can ask us how we manage our time when we are doing something we love and need to stop.

## ...screen time is over

You're feeling left out! Your friends get to play, and you've got homework to finish. Sounds like you know the rule is "no screen time until homework is done." Must be something you CAN DO to not feel left out.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can make a plan for getting your homework done early.
- You can invite a friend over to get homework done together.
- You can text your friends after you are done to catch up.

## ...you're at a family meal

You want to text your friends, and it's dinner time, so no phones at the table. Must be something you CAN DO to keep the rule and keep up with your friends.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- Show me where you will put your phone while we eat.
- You can tuck your phone under your chair and text your friends as soon as you're finished eating.
- I can hold onto your phone for you while you get used to eating dinner without it.
- If it's SUPER-important you can go send a quick message in the other room and then leave the phone there when you come back.

## ...you're at a restaurant

You're blowing bubbles with your milk.  
They're going over the top! Must be  
something you can do to keep the milk in  
the cup!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

I can keep your milk over here, and you can tell me when you  
are ready to try again.

You can mark a line on the glass that you won't go over.

You can put it in a cup with a lid so it won't make a big mess.

You can blow bubbles outside with me after supper.

## ...you're at a restaurant

You feel tired. That makes it hard to sit up  
in your seat, and it's time to eat. Hmm, must  
be something you CAN DO to stay awake  
and eat with us.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can lean on me as soon as you're finished eating.

We can eat earlier next time so you're not so sleepy.

We can tell jokes to help you giggle and wake up a little more!

I can feed you with three "airplane" bites to get you started.

## ...it's bath time/bedtime

You noticed that the water was getting out of the tub and onto the floor. Looks like you know the water has to stay in the tub.

Must be something you CAN DO to play and keep the floor dry!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can pull the plug so the water is lower.

You can spray your water gun at the back wall of the tub.

You can pour the water over here like this.

You can hop out and wipe it up with this towel.

## ...it's bath time/bedtime

There's a towel on the bathroom floor.  
Must be something you CAN DO to get that towel where it goes.

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

You can ask for help to hang it up.

You can put it on the rack or in the laundry.

I can fly you like an airplane over to it to pick it up!

We could put a hook lower down so it's easier for you to hang it up right away!

You can start walking out of the bathroom backwards so you can see what's on the floor.

## ...it's bath time/bedtime

You're saying, "No! No! No!" You're letting me know you really don't want to! You want to do anything but go to bed, and rats! It's bedtime now! Must be something you CAN DO to feel more ready for bed!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can yell "no" as many times as you want to while we get you ready.
- You can pick your jammies and which book to read!
- You can tell me one thing that could help you, and I'll let you know if it works for me.
- You can have a piggy back ride to your bed, or I can fly you in if that would help.

## ...it's bath time/bedtime

You're feeling scared of the dark. You don't want to go to bed. It's time for bed now. Must be something you CAN DO to feel brave!

### POSSIBLE CAN DOs:

- You can have a bedside light.
- You can sleep with the bathroom light on.
- I can stay with you until you fall asleep.
- You can pile up all your stuffed animals around you for protection!
- I can come back to check on you in two minutes, then longer the braver you feel.



Check in with our **STRENGTHs** booklet for 100+ **STRENGTHs** that solidify your child's awareness of their inner greatness. You'll also find more examples of **Super-Star Centering Statements + STRENGTHs** like the following. These examples work well after your child has succeeded in shifting their behavior to meet their **NEEDs** within your boundaries.

“You knew exactly what to do to calm yourself down. That shows you have self-control!”

“You figured out how to get what you want and still follow the rules! That shows playing fair is important to you.”

“You came up with a solution right away! That shows you're creative.”

“You found a way to wait! That shows you're patient.”

“You were frustrated, but it didn't stop you! It was important to you to stick with it. That shows you're a problem-solver.”

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## Camilla Miller

Camilla is a mother of two based in West Sussex U.K. As a qualified primary school teacher, she didn't think much about her parenting skills until her second child was born...then BAM! This child was more reactive, impulsive and threw epic tantrums.



Camilla knew there had to be a way to raise kids that didn't include constant struggles, naughty steps, or reward charts, and she was right. When she discovered Language of Listening® her first thought was, "Why did no one tell me this before?!!"

Camilla's passion is to support parents to really understand their child, especially the more challenging, reactive kids, and give parents the tools they need to transform family life. As an authorized coach, Camilla shares Language of Listening® tools on her blog, and coaches parents privately and through her courses, workshops, and Facebook group: [facebook.com/groups/keepingyourcoolparenting](https://www.facebook.com/groups/keepingyourcoolparenting).

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## Rosemary Clark

Rosemary Clark lives in Canada with her husband and best friend, Steve, and their two sweet girls. After a difficult childhood, Rose ached to learn how to parent in a way that comes from the heart and honors children as separate individuals with their own unique thoughts and feelings.



"I knew what kind of a mom I wanted to be but I didn't know if those tools existed - then I found Language of Listening®." Now, as an authorized Language of Listening® coach, Rose is thrilled to work with moms to equip them with tools to uncover the messages their heart has been sending them for decades so they can get REAL Self-Care, hold boundaries with ease and show up for their families in ways they truly ENJOY. Connect with Rose by joining her Facebook group: [facebook.com/groups/lovethewayyouparent](https://www.facebook.com/groups/lovethewayyouparent) and by following her on Instagram: [instagram.com/love.the.way.you.parent](https://www.instagram.com/love.the.way.you.parent).

# Language of Listening® CAN DOs

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