

Empowering Language Quick Reference

Teaching daily living skills without taking over, talking down, or doing the task for the person.

HUNTERS HELPERS

CORE TEACHING RULE

Let the person show you first. Notice and protect what they can already do. Wait. Use the smallest useful prompt. Teach only the part that is missing. Then give the task back.

Before You Step In

A six-question pause before you add more help.

- 1 Has the person had a real chance to try?
- 2 Have I allowed enough processing time?
- 3 Am I helping because they need support - or because I can do it faster?
- 4 Could a smaller cue work instead?
- 5 Can I help only with the difficult part and immediately give the task back?
- 6 Am I speaking to this person like an adult with agency?

In the Moment

Use clear adult language that keeps the person involved.

Starting the task **TRY** "Show me how you usually start."

AVOID Let me show you how to do this.

The person pauses **TRY** "Take your time."

AVOID You don't know?

The person gets stuck **TRY** "Which part is getting difficult?"

AVOID Here, I'll do it.

A cue may help **TRY** "What does your checklist say comes next?"

AVOID Giving the answer first.

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Keep the respect. Keep the clarity. Use the least intrusive support that works.

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In the Moment - Continued

A safe mistake happens

TRY "Take another look. Anything you want to change?"

AVOID That's wrong.

The person asks for help

TRY "Absolutely. What part do you want help with?"

AVOID You need to do it yourself.

Patronizing -> Empowering

Swap vague praise, pressure, or control for specific adult language.

INSTEAD OF	TRY
You're such a big helper!	You handled the dishes and wiped the counter without a reminder.
See? That wasn't so hard.	You found a way through the part that was giving you trouble.
Be a good listener.	I'm going to give one step. Tell me if you want me to repeat it or explain it differently.
You need to be more independent.	Which parts would you like to be able to do with less help?
Calm down.	Do you want a minute, a quieter space, or help figuring out the next step?
No, that's wrong.	Take another look. Is there anything you want to change?

What to Reinforce

Notice the skill, strategy, or self-advocacy - not just compliance.

STRATEGY	"You checked your list when you weren't sure."
PROBLEM-SOLVING	"The first way didn't work, and you tried another approach."
SELF-ADVOCACY	"You told me exactly which part you wanted help with."
SELF-MONITORING	"You caught that before I said anything."
USE OF SUPPORTS	"You set your own reminder and used it when it went off."

REMEMBER

The goal is not 'no support.' Use the least intrusive support that lets the person participate successfully, safely, and with as much control as possible.

Follow the person's approved plan, agency requirements, required training, and professional guidance.