



Finding the Words:
*Starting Conversations About
 Your Child's Special Needs*

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**Your
 Finding the Words:**
Starting Conversations About Your Child's Special Needs

- Care Parent Network
Who we are, and what we do
- Finding Your Words...
Tips from a Parent's Perspective



Care Parent Network

Helping Families of Children with Special Needs
 We serve families of children from birth to 22 years old (and beyond) who have developmental delays, developmental disabilities, health care needs requiring extensive specialty medical care, and/or who are receiving special education services.

Services in English and Spanish - no fees for services

Family Resource Center of Contra Costa County
 All families in Contra Costa County are eligible to receive services.



Care Parent Network can help.

We are all parents of child with special needs.
We have "been there", and we are here to listen.

We provide emotional support and support
navigating the service systems.

We have an extensive list of partners throughout
Contra Costa County to whom we refer parents
and contact on behalf of parents.

www.CareParentNetwork.org

925-313-0999



And find us on Facebook!

Finding *Your* Words: A Parent's Perspective

Disclaimer!!!

In the interests of truth in advertising...

No secret formulas guaranteed to work!
No amazing miracle results!
One size does not fit all!

I just have my experience and the experience that others have shared.
Your experience may (almost certainly will) vary.

Finding *Your* Words: A Parent's Perspective

Give yourself permission to

- Trust yourself and your knowledge of your child
 - Do what feels right to you and what feels right for your child
- Do things in your own time
 - Sometimes it is good to put off until tomorrow...
- Figure things out as you go
 - Planning is useful, but things don't always go as planned
- Not be perfect and to claim the right to have "do-overs"



Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Information is yours to hold or share as you choose

What you say depends on the audience and situation

- Acquaintances and community members
- Friends
- Family – extended and immediate
- Your child

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Acquaintances and Community

Prepare an "elevator speech" (or speeches)

A short summary used to communicate a message quickly and simply

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Acquaintances and Community

Not everyone is entitled to information or explanation

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Friends

- Can provide support and practice telling your story
- Can be your "surrogates" in the grapevine / gossip circuit

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Friends

Never underestimate the gossip circuit.
Use it to your advantage.

Put ***your*** words into the gossip circuit.

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Family

As relationships get closer,
conversations may get more difficult.

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

A recipe for planning for a conversation:

1. What is the purpose of the conversation?
2. What do you want to accomplish?
What are your expectations?
3. What is your attitude?

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Your child

(and your child's siblings)

Talking with your child about his/her special needs

- What information is your child ready for?
- What information does your child need to know at this point in time?
- Explanations in terms of examples from your child's own experience.

You know your child best.

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Your child

(and your child's siblings)

"Talking with" instead of "talking at"

Ask your child questions to pull him/her into the conversation:

- > Do you think...? What do you think...?
- > Why do you think...? Why do you think that...?

And what if your child doesn't want to talk with you?

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Help your child develop his /her own "elevator speech".



Help your child develop his /her self-advocacy skills.

It's never too soon! It's never too late!

Finding *Your* Words:

A Parent's Perspective

Identify strengths

- Yours
- Your child's
- Your family's
- Your community

Emphasize strengths
