

Learning Objective: To help children recognize that how things are said can be just as important as what is said

Skill: Emotional communication, self-awareness

Ask the group what they think “tone of voice” means. Brainstorm definitions and write them on the blackboard or a large sheet of paper. Give examples of different tones of voice.

Explain that:

The tone of your voice—how you are actually saying something—communicates what you feel. Often, your tone of voice can give a stronger message than your words. Sometimes, how you say something can change the meaning of what you are saying. It can even give the message that you don't really mean what you are saying.

Have the children sit in a circle. Going around the circle, ask them to give examples of voice tone that can change the meaning of what's being said or communicate the wrong feeling.

Example 1: The first child in the circle says, “I love ice cream” in a bored voice. The next child then says, “I love ice cream” as though she really does love it.

Example 2: The next child says, “I have so much homework!” in a happy voice. The next child says the same sentence in a tone he thinks appropriate, such as unhappy or angry.

Example 3: The next child says, “I think your shoes are cool” in a surprised voice. The next child says the same sentence in a tone she thinks appropriate, such as complimentary or friendly.

This activity can continue around the circle, with children making up their own statements. Follow up with a discussion of how voice tone affects the meaning of what's being said.