



# **Child Language Brokering Toolkit #2<sup>1</sup>**

## **Managing Negative Thoughts & Feelings**

### **Strategies & Advice to Manage Language Brokering<sup>2</sup>**

This is a toolkit, which is a booklet resource, you can read now and for future language brokering situations. It has a list of best practices and general tips on what parents and children can do by themselves and together to make language brokering successful.

<sup>1</sup> Child Language Brokering - children providing support by translating and interpreting things to and from English for their parents who lack or have limited English skills (Tse, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from TIES CCW Settlement Practitioner's Toolkit 2020

**Note:** Definitions of some words are located at the bottom of the page



## **This toolkit was produced by Research & Program Development at The Immigrant Education Society.**

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# BEST PRACTICES (PARENT)

These are suggestions for **parents** to follow *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

## Before Language Brokering

→ If you are feeling *nervous, afraid, worried, or stressed* before **asking your child** and/or **the language brokering situation...**

- ◆ Notice how you feel and how your body feels
  - Are you having stressful thoughts?
  - Is your heart beating a lot and your breathing is fast?
- ◆ Positive thinking
- ◆ **'Soft Belly' Mindfulness Meditation<sup>3</sup>** and **deep breathing** (2-minute activity)

These are normal responses to experiencing stress.

However, they can be managed with practicing positive thinking and deep-breathing techniques

1. •Pause - find a quiet comfortable spot where you can briefly be alone
2. • Sit in an upright position or lay down on your back
3. • Close your eyes
4. •Think about what is making you feel negative  
•For example - "I am feeling stressed, nervous, anxious, worried, angry, frustrated, etc..."
5. •Now, place a hand on your belly and pay attention to how your belly feels
6. •Slowly, breathe **in** through your nose to fill your belly  
•Feel your belly **expanding** with your hand
7. •Slowly, breathe **out** through your mouth to empty your belly  
•Feel your belly **deflate** with your hand
8. •When you breathe in and out, notice the feeling  
•When you breathe **out**, tell yourself positive things  
•For example: "I can do this, it will be okay. My child will try his/her best and I will be there to help"

<sup>3</sup> **Mindfulness Meditation** → A type of mental practice in which you bring your focus to be presently aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without negative judgement. The *soft-belly technique* involves deep belly breaths which increases relaxation, lowers blood pressure and tension, and reduces anxious or stressful thoughts and feelings (Levine & Levine, 1993).



## During Language Brokering

- **Notice** that your child might be *nervous* or *anxious* → reassure your child throughout the process to help ease their nerves
- Remain **patient** and **calm**
  - ◆ If it is a difficult situation...
    - Feeling frustrated and stressed is **normal**
    - It can take some time for everyone to understand
    - Allowing yourself to continue to feel frustrated or stressed can lead to anger and arguments with your child
  - ◆ Speak slowly and clearly while using a calm tone
  - ◆ Take a quick moment for yourself to calm down these negative feelings by practicing **deep breathing**
- Quick **deep breathing** exercise – an effective way to calm yourself in the moment
  1. Close your eyes or focus your open eyes at an object
  2. Slowly breathe in through your nose (as you do it, count to 5)
  3. Slowly breathe out through your mouth (as you do it, count to 5)
  4. Repeat a few more times until feeling better

## After Language Brokering

- **De-Stress**<sup>4</sup>
  - ◆ Take a deep breath to relax
    - Follow the **Soft-Belly Mindfulness Meditation** technique or the quick **deep breathing** exercise

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<sup>4</sup> *De-stress* → Relaxing after experience stress or tension.



# General Tips

- Notice and be thankful for the effort and work your child did. It will make your child more confident
- Being more patient will make the situation easier
  - Ask yourself what is making you not patient
    - For example – do you want the translations to always be fast and simple?
  - Practicing **mindfulness meditation** and **deep breathing** can help you to slow down and pay attention to the present
    - Overtime, this can help you build more patience
  - Practicing **empathy** – learn and understand how your child feels
    - Your child is still young and learning new things each day
  - S/he is trying his/her best and doing the translations in his/her own way
    - \*\*\*Refer to the toolkit #1 to try the different helpful ways if it will make the language



# BEST PRACTICES (CHILD)

These are suggestions for **children** to follow *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

## Before Language Brokering

→ If you are feeling *nervous, afraid, worried, or stressed* going into the language brokering situation...

- ◆ Recognize how you feel
- ◆ Positive thinking
  - “It’s okay and understandable if I make a mistake”
- ◆ ‘Soft Belly’ Mindfulness Meditation<sup>5</sup> and deep breathing (2-minute activity)

1. •Pause - find a quiet comfortable spot where you can briefly be alone
2. • Sit in an upright position or lay down on your back
3. •Close your eyes
4. •Think about what is making you feel negative  
•For example - “I am feeling stressed, nervous, anxious, worried, angry, frustrated, etc...”
5. •Now, place a hand on your belly and pay attention to how your belly feels
6. •Slowly, breathe **in** through your nose to fill your belly  
•Feel your belly **expanding** with your hand
7. •Slowly, breathe **out** through your mouth to empty your belly  
•Feel your belly **deflate** with your hand
8. •When you breathe in and out, notice the feeling  
•When you breathe **out**, tell yourself positive things  
•For example: “I can do this, it will be okay. My parent will be there to help”

<sup>5</sup> **Mindfulness Meditation** → A type of mental practice in which you bring your focus to be presently aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without negative judgement. The *soft-belly technique* involves deep belly breaths which increases relaxation, lowers blood pressure and tension, and reduces anxious or stressful thoughts and feelings (Levine & Levine, 1993).



## During Language Brokering

- Recognize how you feel...
  - ◆ Are you feeling *nervous, anxious, scared, frustrated, embarrassed*, etc.?
- **Positive self-talk** – using a positive attitude to talk to yourself in your head
  - ◆ If you are making mistakes with translations or still not understanding something...
    - Allow yourself to feel that frustration and then tell yourself, “It’s okay, I will eventually get this right” or “I got this!”
    - \*\*\*Refer to Toolkit #1 for helpful tips to use to help reduce the negative thoughts and feelings you’re experiencing
- Let your parent know what you are feeling
  - ◆ Especially if you are feeling frustrated or stressed, your parent can try to help you work through these feelings during the translations
- Remain **patient** and **calm**...
  - ◆ If it is a difficult situation...
    - Feeling frustrated and stressed is a normal response
    - It may take some time for you and/or your parent and other people involved to understand things
    - Allowing yourself to continue to feel frustrated can lead to anger and arguments with your parent
  - ◆ If you are feeling **pressured**...
    - It’s okay to tell your parent or the other person that you need time to think
    - Take your time to process the information to be translated
  - ◆ Speak slowly and clearly while using a calm tone
  - ◆ Take a quick moment for yourself to calm down these negative feelings by practicing **deep breathing**
- Quick **deep breathing** exercise – an effective way to calm yourself in the moment
  1. Close your eyes or focus your open eyes at an object
  2. Slowly breathe in through your nose (as you do it, count to 5)
  3. Slowly breathe out through your mouth (as you do it, count to 5)
  4. Repeat a few more times until feeling better

## After Language Brokering

- **De-stress**<sup>6</sup>
  - ◆ Take a deep breath to relax, especially after a highly stressful or difficult situation
    - Follow the **Soft-Belly Mindfulness Meditation** technique or the quick **deep breathing** exercise
- **Positive self-talk**

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<sup>6</sup> **De-stress** → Relaxing after experience stress or tension.



- ◆ If mistakes or an unsuccessful situation happened, you may think...
  - “I am stupid”
    - *Instead* → “I just did not understand something, it doesn’t mean I am not smart”
  - “I have failed, I am embarrassed”
    - *Instead* → “I am proud of myself for even trying”
  - “I am not going to get better at translations”
    - *Instead* → “I will give it another try, I’ll get better with each time I do it”
  - “I must be perfect”
    - *Instead* → “It is normal to make mistakes, and it will be okay when I make one”

## General Tips

- Acknowledge that your role as a language broker is unique and important even though you may feel that it is just an ordinary task, like washing dishes or doing homework
- Are you a shy person or always feeling nervous before doing translations?
  - The more you frequently **expose** yourself to different language brokering situations and difficult ones too...
    - The more comfortable you feel talking to different people in different places
    - The more confident you feel with your abilities to translate and communicate
  - For example: If you are afraid of cats, the more you expose yourself to being around cats and interact with them, you realize that cats aren’t harmful and begin to feel comfortable around them
- **Avoiding negative self-talk**
  - If you made mistakes with your translations or did not understand something...
    - It does not mean you are not smart and unable to continue language brokering
      - Saying to yourself, “I am dumb, I will never understand” will only bring your confidence down and make you feel bad about yourself
    - Tell yourself that it is okay to make mistakes and that you are still learning new things each day
      - Think about all the things you have accomplished
        - Especially, the task of learning at least two languages!
- Building more **patience** will help you through managing hard situations
  - Ask yourself what is making you impatient
    - For example – Do you want the translations to always be fast and simple?
  - Practicing **mindfulness meditation** and **deep breathing** can help you to slow



- down and pay attention to the present
  - Overtime, this can help you build more patience
- Practicing **empathy**
  - If what is making you feel impatient is your parent talking too much or not understanding everything all the time...
    - Try to empathize with your parent's position...
      - Your parent is still adjusting to the new culture and language
      - S/he has been through a lot to get to Canada
      - S/he may not know how to help you during the translations
        - \*\*\*Refer to the toolkit #1 to try the different helpful ways if it will make the language brokering situations better



# BEST PRACTICES (TEAMWORK)

These are suggestions for parents and children to follow **together** *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

Teamwork is about using **what you know** and **how you are** to cooperatively work together to make language brokering easier and successful

## **Before** Language Brokering

- Share with each other how you feel going in the language brokering situation
- If both or one of you is feeling *nervous, afraid, worried, or stressed...*
  - ◆ **Reassure** each other that, "It will be okay even if mistakes happen"
  - ◆ **Encourage** each other, "Just try your best"
  - ◆ **Practice deep breathing** with each other

## **During** Language Brokering

- If you notice one of you or both of you are feeling frustrated and/or stressed...
  - ◆ Acknowledge the feelings
  - ◆ Then remind the other to relax using the deep breathing technique
- Maintain **patience** and **calmness...**
  - ◆ Not raising one's voice or using an angry or frustrated tone with each other
    - Speaking to each other slowly and clearly
      - This will make understanding easier and will avoid misunderstanding
  - ◆ **Parent** → Try to not rush your child to think and translate faster
    - This will make him/her feel pressured and more stressed and frustrated
  - ◆ **Child** → Try to not get upset when your parent is not understanding something or telling you too much information to translation
    - Try to recognize that what your parent is telling you is important and needs to be translated for what s/he needs



## After Language Brokering

### → Debriefing<sup>7</sup>

- ◆ Share with each other...
  - Any kinds of feelings you both experienced and noticed in each other
    - Examples:
      - ◆ Parent to child: “I saw you were getting frustrated when I started talking a lot”
      - ◆ Child to parent: “I felt really proud of myself when I was able to get the translations right on the first try”
- ◆ Acknowledge the feelings each other felt
  - Examples:
    - Parent to child: “I understand you feel too tired to think and didn’t get all the translations right”
    - Child to parent: “I know that you got impatient when I started to get frustrated with not understanding right away”
- ◆ Moving forward...
  - Discuss how you can improve your teamwork even better
    - Do you both need to prepare more before the translations?
    - Do you both need to practice more patience?
    - Do you both need to overall help each other during the translations?

### → Positive Reinforcement<sup>8</sup>

- ◆ Parent
  - Thank and praise your child for the work they did
    - Example: “Thank you for helping me, you did a very good job!”
  - Encouragement if the situation was difficult or mistakes happened
    - Example: “It’s okay if you translated wrong, you’ll get it next time with more practice!”
- ◆ Child
  - Compliment your parent for helping you and for understanding the translations
    - Example: “Thank you helping me and understanding my translations!”

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<sup>7</sup> **Debriefing** → An immediate discussion about what happened during a language brokering event.

<sup>8</sup> **Positive Reinforcement** → Rewarding a desired behaviour to increase the chance the behaviour will occur again.

# RESOURCES

The following is a list of TIES and other community resources to address individual or family emotional wellness concerns.

## TIES Resources

### TIES Healthy Minds

- Free, confidential services you to find peace and balance in your life
- <https://www.tieshealthyminds.ca/>
- For more information:
  - [www.tieshealthyminds.ca](http://www.tieshealthyminds.ca)
  - 587-393-3414
  - [healthyminds@immigrant-education.ca](mailto:healthyminds@immigrant-education.ca)

## Community Resources

### Distress Centre Calgary (DCC)

- DCC provides 24-hour crisis support, professional counselling, youth peer support and referrals
- <https://www.distresscentre.com/need-help/>
- 24-hour support contact:
  - Crisis line: 403-266-4357
  - [help@distresscentre.com](mailto:help@distresscentre.com)
- Youth & Teen Support contact:
  - 24-hour phone support: 403-264-8336
  - Daily text messaging: 587-333-2724
  - <https://calgaryconnecteen.com/>

### 211

- Free essential service in Alberta to help people find the right resource or service for whatever issue they need help with
- Available in over 170 languages and 24-hours by phone, text, and chat
- Call 2-1-1
- Text INFO to 211
- Chat with 211
- <https://ab.211.ca/>

