

ATHLETA
G!RL

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GIRLS
LEADERSHIP

THE CODE OF CONFIDENCE

Athleta Girl is challenging the status quo on how the world speaks to girls—replacing “how do you look?” with “how do you feel?” Too often, girls are taught their value comes from how others see them. This hands over their self-worth to others and tends to leave them with a fragile sense of confidence. Girls’ confidence drops by 30% in middle school—changing the conversation at a young age is critical.

By asking girls to connect to their internal experience—how they’re feeling—we’re teaching them to look inward for validation. This helps them build a resilient sense of confidence. In collaboration with our non-profit partner, Girls Leadership, we created the Code of Confidence, a resource for fellow retail brands—and anyone—to reframe their communication with girls in a way that helps build their confidence.



BUILDING AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

When welcoming a girl and her accompanying adult into the store, ensure that you connect with both of them. For example, ask, "Who's shopping today, both of you?" What is more powerful than being seen?

Lead with questions that focus on what she likes to do and what feels good to her, not what she wants to look like. This could include:

What activities do you do?

What do you do for fun?

What sports are you into?



Expand with:

What is your name?

How old are you?

What grade are you in?

What school do you go to?

Connect with the adult, making sure not to ask the adult to speak for the girl:

Do you do activities together?

Does she shop out of your closet?

What does she always wear of yours?

WORDS MATTER

Use these guidelines when talking to girls to learn how they are feeling—in the clothes they're wearing, or just in general.

WORDS TO USE

Strong	Fresh	Glowing
Amazing	Refreshed	Comfortable
Joyful	Energetic	Free
Confident	Proud	Powerful
Excited	Enthusiastic	
Happy	Positive	

WORDS TO AVOID

Skinny	Pretty	Tight
Tiny	Cute	Slimming
Thin	Gorgeous	Flattering
Lean	Adorable	Big/Small
Small	Mini	Tall/Short
Little	Darling	
Petite	Precious	



DECISION MAKING

If a girl is weighing a decision, it might help to have some time or space to come to her own decision. Instead of saying, "I think you should get the size X because it doesn't bunch up," try offering, "This is your choice and only you know what feels right for your body. Would it help

if (your adult and) I give you a few minutes to make your decision?" This gives her the chance to connect with herself. The essential message is that you trust the girl, and she has what it takes to trust her body and herself.



EXAMPLE SCENARIOS & SOLUTIONS

The Scenario

A girl walks into the store with her mom. She's wearing a lot of pink clothing, and a sales associate immediately greets her with, "Hi Princess!"

The Impact

Using the word "Princess" reinforces gender stereotypes and draws immediate attention to her appearance.

The Alternative

Greet her and ask her if pink is her favorite color—if it is, why? How does wearing pink make her feel? Let her know we have some styles in her favorite color.



The Scenario

Two girls walk into the store with their father. The sales associate learns that one of the girls is much younger than the other, yet they look around the same size. The associate comments to the older one, "Wow, you're so tiny, I wouldn't have thought you were the older sister!"

The Impact

Height and size in general can be sensitive topics for girls and drawing attention can cause a girl to become self-conscious.

The Alternative

Get to know the girls a bit and learn what their preferences are—ask questions along the lines of what activities they participate in, what their favorite colors are, and what clothing makes them feel the most comfortable. Then guide them in the direction of what they each might like, and enable them to make personal choices.





The Scenario

A girl comes out of the dressing room wearing the clothes she's interested in buying. She shows her mom and the store associate, awaiting their approval. The associate says, "You look so cute in these! You HAVE to get them, you'll be the envy of all your friends!"

The Impact

Going straight for looks as a way to describe her only reinforces her self-worth being tied to someone else's view of them. Also, referencing that her outfit will inspire the adoration of her friends further drives in self-worth on the basis of looks and external validation.

The Alternative

Ask her how these clothes make her feel and ask her why she chose these pieces. If you want to make a connection to her life outside of the store, ask where she might wear them or if there is a special occasion coming up.

The Scenario

A girl who wears a larger size than other girls in her grade comes out of a dressing room asking her mom and the sales associate if the outfit makes her look good? The store associate offers other, slimming alternatives.

The Impact

Using language like "slimming" or "more flattering" can impact a girl's perspective on body positivity and encourage her to believe that being skinny and fitting into a certain mold is acceptable—even preferred.

The Alternative

Ask the girl how she feels in the outfit and if she's happy with the choices she made for the outfitting she chose. Offer alternative colors and prints first before offering smaller or larger sizes. Allow her to provide feedback first and explain how she feels in the pieces.

