

9 Things Parents Should Never Say to Their Children

In another blog, I addressed the power of the tongue by noting that your tongue is a wild animal: You need to chain it, tame it and train it. Chain it by being silent when you know nothing good will come out of your mouth. Tame it by vowing each day that you will harness and control your tongue. And train it to breathe life-giving words into those you love.

When it comes to your kids, your tongue can do a whole lot of damage, if you're not careful. Never underestimate the defeating power of a few careless words. So here are nine things that you should never say to your kids:

1. "Why can't you be more like _____?" Comparisons are toxic and they serve no positive purpose. Comparing your child to their brother, sister or friend only tears down your child and makes them feel like they're not good enough or don't measure up. Treat each child of yours as an individual. Never say, "Why can't you do well in school like your sister?" Do say, "What can we do to help you do your very best in school?" Each of your children is unique. It's important to treat them uniquely.

2. "I don't have time right now." One Saturday morning, when my son, Marky, was a little boy, he showed me his ball and glove and said, "Dad, let's play baseball." Of course, since I'm Mr. Family Guy, I said, "Sure, son." Right? Wrong. No, I said "I don't have time right now. I'm fixing the toilet. Just give me a few minutes." Well, the minutes turned into hours and when I was ready that afternoon to play ball, my son said, "No thanks, Dad." When we say, "I don't have time," what we're really saying is, "What I'm doing is more important than what you need." or "There's something else I'd rather be doing." Is there anything more important for us to do than to spend time

with our children and family?

3. “I don’t think you can do it.” What your child hears is, “I don’t believe in you.” Knowing you believe in them gives your kids strength, courage, motivation, tenacity and more. Take that belief away and the damage will be huge. When you’re tempted to say something like this, instead say, “You’ve got some big obstacles, but I’m here for you, cheering you on and ready to help you to do your very best.” While you don’t want to fill your kids with false hope or inflated pride, you do want to encourage them in their goals.

4. “You’re such a disappointment.” Your kids can mess up, and they will. We all do. But if you want your children to learn from their mistakes, address their mess and how it can be fixed without hanging it on them. The label of *failure* is a heavy load to carry, and most kids won’t hold up. Try saying, “Your [bad grade, bad choice, etc.] is disappointing, but I love you no matter what. What can you learn from this?” Separate who your child is from the mess they’ve made.

5. “Don’t be such a wimp.” This should never be said to a boy or a girl. But, for a boy, it’s basically saying, “You don’t have what it takes to be a man” and can damage him to the core for quite some time. Saying, “You throw like a girl” to your son can have the same effect.

6. “You’re such a bonehead.” Telling your child they’re stupid is implanted in the hard drive of their mind and is difficult to delete. It’s certainly no way to motivate them.

7. “Can’t you do anything right?” When a parent says this to a child in the heat of the moment, it’s not only saying that the child messed this one thing up, but also that they mess up everything. It’s always dangerous to use broadbrush words like always, never, everything or anything.

8. Why didn’t you make the starting team? Your daughter or son probably tried really hard to make the starting team, but

landed on the B squad. They probably already are disappointed about it and don't need anyone to pour vinegar into their wound. Instead, they need to be praised for doing their best and for even making the team.

9. "So you made a B+, why didn't you get an A?" When something like this is said, here is what a child hears, "Nothing I do is good enough for my mom or dad." If they did their best, we should praise them. If they didn't, we should challenge them to give it everything they've got the next time.

By the way, the 5 Toxins of the Tongue that Can Poison Your Marriage also apply to your relationship with your children. It might provide you with further insight on this topic as well. And these 5 Types of Powerful Words for Your Marriage are likewise applicable to your children and will help you to build them up.

What other hurtful things have you said to your kids? How did you remedy the situation? Share your experiences below.

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