

9 Things Your Child Needs to Hear

As an author I use creative phrases all the time, but sometimes at home I find myself repeating the same ones:

- No.
- Stop that.
- What were you thinking?
- That wasn't a very good choice.
- Seriously?

Sometimes these phrases are well-deserved. "No, you cannot fill the bathtub with Jell-O." But most of the time the words slip out because I'm tired. Or they spill out from habit. It takes work for me to notice my child and to find something good in his or her actions. It takes effort to point out areas where I see growth in my child, instead of simply pointing out faults.

Yet when I take the time to speak words of truth and hope, I can see a difference in my child's eyes and attitude. As a mom of younger kids, I know positive words encourage good behaviors. And as a mom of adult kids I also know what a difference they make in the long run. Our words mold our children's future one syllable at a time.

If you too need to focus on using your words more positively, here are a few phrases to start with:

I'm proud of you.

Look your child in the eye and say this. These words should not be dependent on grades or performance. Be proud of your child for doing his best, for trying and for not giving up.

God has great plans for you.

It's easy for your child to compare her weaknesses to other kids' strengths. She may wonder why she's not a better ball player, singer, or writer. She needs to know God designed her exactly how He wants and needs her, and He has good plans for her future.

You made a great choice.

It's easy to point out when our kids mess up, but when their choices are affirmed, they will strive to make good choices more often. "That was a good media choice." "Great job starting your homework before you went out to play." "I appreciate your choice to share with your sister."

Have fun!

We don't have to take everything in life so seriously. Before every sporting event, recital, speech or performance remind your child to have fun. It's not about winning; it's about doing her best—and usually when a child is having fun she does a better job and wants to do it again.

Keep trying!

There are times when your child will fail, mess up or fall short. Remind him that ALL of us do that throughout our lives. If your child can't get the hang of something, share a time when you fell short but kept on trying. Many times kids feel far too much pressure to get things right the first time. Also, share something you're currently working at and finding hard to succeed with. Let your child know even you struggle at things. Finally, explain how God can help give us strength, wisdom or peace to keep going.

Wow, that's so creative.

It's easy to judge academics or achievements, but we often miss praising creativity. When your child builds a troll cave in your backyard or makes a necklace out of gum wrappers, stop

and take notice. Creative thinkers go far in life, yet their “works of art” as kids often aren’t appreciated.

I’m so glad you’re part of our family.

Even within a family, kids find it too easy to compare, and they often question their place. Let your child know his value and worth within your home. It’ll make it easier to see his value and worth in the world.

Your hard work paid off!

Hard work needs to be praised. The idea of “you get an A for effort” is a good one!

I love you.

This one is obvious, but kids need to hear it often. Your children need to hear this many times throughout the day—in happy moments or difficult ones. Your love makes all the difference.

How about you? What phrases impacted you as a child? And which ones do you find your kids wanting/needing to hear? It’s amazing how our words can make any situation better when we focus on the positive. Try it out!

Tricia Goyer *has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.*