

Short Sentences Your Child Needs to Hear From You

In raising our five children, Susan and I have tried to consistently convey to each of them these six short sentences. We've done it with our words and our actions.

And, as I write this post, I'm realizing I need to say these things even more because they can't be said enough.

Saying these six short sentences will give your child a strong sense of security, identity, belonging, and value.

1. "I'm here for you." Being available for your child is incredibly important. They may not need you when you tell them this, but they'll remember you promised to be available to them when they need you the most. This sentence is more than just giving them permission to find you when the going gets rough ... it's an invitation to them. It tells them, "I will do whatever I can to help you whenever you need me."

2. "I'm proud of you." Some middle-aged men I've talked to have never heard, or have waited years to hear, their dad say "I'm proud of you." And many of them thought if they just performed better, if they just made it big in sports or if they just had a thriving money-making career, their dad just might notice. Ladies and gentlemen, please don't make your kids wait. Tell them today.

3. "I believe in you." Remember back to your teen and early adult years? How confident were you in yourself? And how confident are you today in yourself? Self-doubt and second-guessing come with the territory of being human. And you can be a great source of support to your child through these struggles. Your child needs to know that somebody somewhere in this world believes in them and their immeasurable value.

4. “I want the best for you.” This sentence has a couple of benefits. First, it tells your child you have a purpose behind your parenting. They may not understand how you see “what’s best” and they may not even agree with you, but they will hopefully start to appreciate it over time as they see you working hard to do what’s in their best interests. I have often said to each of my kids, “I’m doing this or saying this because I always have your best interests at heart.” And they know they can always trust me. Second, it puts you in their corner. Again, they may not always see how your ideas, your standards or your consequences are really for their benefit, but giving them this regular reminder at least assures them, in the depths of their heart, that you are for them, not against them.

5. “I will stand with you.” I saw a video recently of a dad dancing with his daughter at a talent show. The girl had a severe and rare disorder that keeps her from having almost any muscle tone, control or physical abilities of her own. But as her dad picked her up out of her chair and danced around the stage, her nearly inexpressive face suddenly blossomed with a huge smile. This girl knows her dad is willing to risk embarrassment, harassment or scorn from anyone in order to be counted with her. This sentence tells your child you are willing to be identified with them even when they’ve made a mistake or have to do hard things.

6. “I love you.” This is, quite simply, a sentence that cannot be said too many times. Big family moment? “I love you.” Quiet and quick goodnight? “I love you.” Dropping them off at school or a job? “I love you.” Just for no particular reason at all in the middle of the day? “I love you.” {eo}

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