



## positive parenting

### How to Talk to Your Child in a Positive Way

By Nancy Zrymiak

**S**top being so lazy, get down here and clean up this mess!" you scream at the top of your lungs. You're tired, you're fed up, you've asked your child repeatedly to clean up and you've reached your boiling point. You think to yourself, "Did I really just say 'lazy'?" Your child creeps into the room and cowers in the corner. You feel like a crazy person. Okay, it happens, give yourself a break—in fact you should probably tell your child you are going for a time out. Gather your thoughts in private; lock yourself in the bathroom and think about how you are going to diffuse the situation. How can you turn negative talk into positive talk and bring out the best in you and your child?

Listen to the way you talk to your child. If you are always saying no or barking out orders, you can expect your child to do the same. Not only to you but also to other children. Ask yourself, "Would I want to be spoken to like that?" If not, it is time to change the way you are communicating with your child.

Here are six tips on how to talk to your child in a positive way:

#### 1. Be Respectful

Remember to say "thank you" and "please" to your child. Apologize when you say something wrong or hurtful. If your child asks permission for something, take some time to think about it. Too often parents blurt out, "no!" If you think it over you might find yourself saying "yes" more often. On the other hand, if you think it over and say no, your child might be disappointed, but will appreciate that you really listen and think about their requests.

#### 2. Watch Your Tone

Is your tone gentle, kind, angry or full of guilt? A simple statement, such as "come here" from a parent

to a child, depending on the tone used, can result in the child walking toward the parent scared and timid, or have them run and snuggle into the parent's lap.

#### 3. Stay Calm

When your voice starts to rise (and your blood pressure), bring it down to a whisper. Kids are more likely to listen and cooperate in a calm environment. And rather than yell throughout the house, go to where your child is and speak face-to-face.

#### 4. Send a Positive Message

Try to exchange negative words for positive. "Please try to get along with your sister," rather than, "Don't fight." Or, "Everyone helps out around the house," instead of, "Because I said so." Comment on the positive. When your shy child speaks up in public take notice. Tell your child how confident you think they are. Similarly, your child may not be the top scorer on the team but they might make a good pass or run fast: tell them the good stuff. Some parents try to protect their children from failure: "You can try out for the school musical but you can't sing, don't be disappointed if you do not make it." The child will be deflated before trying out. Instead, be supportive and encourage your child to do their best.

#### 5. Lighten Up

Does your child call you the Wicked Witch of the West? If you find yourself becoming a dreaded nag or your child cringes every time you say their name, try to put some fun back into the household. Tell jokes or funny stories while you clean up together. Race your child upstairs to see who can brush their teeth first. "Last one up is a rotten egg." Sometimes it just takes a little humour to change a mundane situation into a memorable one.

#### 6. Focus on the Positive

Try to phrase your words in such a way that your child will open up and talk to you: "You got four A's, and two B's, overall an excellent report card. Now what can you tell me about that C-?" This shows that you are being positive and willing to hear your child's point of view about the situation.

Remember, you are a parent responsible for guiding and encouraging your child, not a sergeant in the army readying the child for battle. You will enrich your child's life when you talk in a positive way. Your child will feel respect and love, will be able to talk to you more openly, and will learn to have a positive perception of you and themselves. Your relationship with your child will benefit when you talk to each other positively, and your child will be better prepared to communicate with family members, peers and others in positive ways ✨