



HOW CAN WORDS HURT?

Adults are often unaware of the negative effects that harsh, sarcastic or abusive words can have on children.

Words like:

- "You're stupid!"
- "Grow up!"
- "Don't be so childish!"
- "I wish you were never born!"

..can result in children believing they are useless, no good and will never amount to anything.

Children tend to believe what their parents or carers tell them.

If the words used are hurtful, then children may develop low self-esteem.

Remember - what you say to children can determine how they feel about themselves and how they feel about you.

Whether they're babies - or teenagers - when children feel loved and worthwhile:

- They are happier
- They have the confidence to try new things
- They recognise and enjoy their own achievements
- They value themselves and others
- They have hope for the future

Long-Term Effects

Children with low self-esteem have often been denied the basic right of every child - to be raised in a loving, caring, nurturing environment.

Some effects of low self-esteem can be:

- Lack of confidence
- Withdrawal, anxiety, insecurity
- Treating other people unfairly
- Eating/health problems
- Behaviour problems
- Poor school grades
- Poor employment opportunities
- Breaking the law
- Drug and alcohol use
- Destructive, violent behaviour

So think before you speak: use words that help, not hurt children.

Be Positive

Tell your children you love them

Make sure you hug and cuddle often. Regularly tell them they are special, loved and wanted. Children need love, even when they misbehave.

Choose your words with care

If the child is misbehaving, remember to tell the child it's the BEHAVIOUR you don't like. Avoid yelling and using hurtful words when you're frustrated and angry. Take a deep breath before you speak. Listen to what you say and how you say it. Be constructive in

your criticism, talk with children about ways they could do things differently.

Spend time with each child

Make time for your children, find out what's happening in their lives, how they feel, what they think. Help them feel heard and understood.

Praise children's and young people's abilities

Let children know when they do things well by using encouraging words. Tell them what the good things are. Respect their talents. Praise their smallest achievements. Remember – even the simple task of tying a shoelace can be quite an achievement for a small child.

Teach children and young people how to cope with failure or disappointment

No one can do everything well. Children need to learn that sometimes they will fail. Share children's disappointments – talk with them when things don't go well.

Build your child's self esteem

Children need to be encouraged to grow up to like themselves, so that they can develop to their full potential. Let them know you are available to talk with them about their feelings and worries.

DON'T TALK AT THEM

Respect children's feelings

Encourage children to share their feelings with someone they trust and share your feelings with them too.

Stop what you are doing and listen when your child talks to you. Show respect for their feelings. These actions give powerful messages to children about how important they are to you.

Children react to tension

Try and address any stress in the family. Children are sensitive to adult tension and may misbehave as a result.

Be fair, reasonable and honest

It's important to give a reason for what you're doing, or what you're asking them to do.

Be honest. Children and young people are better at accepting the truth than adults realise, and respond best to warm positive comments.

Protect children from violence

Children need to feel safe at home and in the community too.