

5 Parenting Phrases to Remove from Your Vocabulary

Think before you speak! This goes for parents too. In our busy parenting mode, we use phrases that do not make complete sense to our children. Make sure you know the circumstances before you blurt out something you will be sorry for later.

“Good job!”

Children like to share their accomplishments with their parents. When we merely say “good job”, it is inadequate as a response. Tell them why you think they did a good job or how it made you feel. If it is something a child has been working hard on like a school project, be lavish with your praise. Issue superlatives such as “amazing”, “terrific”, or “fantastic”. This will let them know that it was worth the effort. If your child helps you around the house, they deserve a sincere “thank you” to encourage them to be helpful in the future. Notice whether or not they truly did a good job, and give them appropriate praise or constructive criticism so they know how to improve. Be more specific rather than general in your praise.

“Because I said so!”

If a child asks you “why”, when you have said “no” to a request, give them an explanation. Of course, it takes longer, but the effort will show them that you really care. Effective parenting keeps the lines of communication open. This answer “because I said so” puts an abrupt end to that. If the child understands the reason for a negative response, it will help them make wiser requests in the future. Help them know that you are concerned for their welfare and safety. Take some time with your family to set up rules and schedules so the child will be aware of the parameters.

“You are so messy!”

Labeling with any number of negative terms can be damaging to a child. Instead, suggest ways a child can improve without condemning them. Try to use motivational adjectives rather than put downs. If a child always makes a mess, help them come up with ideas to be more organized. With a little instruction and a few tools (baskets or drawers), children can learn to keep their things in their proper place. By repeatedly calling them “messy”, you are reinforcing their behavior.

“Why do you always....?”

The terms “always” and “never” are hurtful and not true. Eliminate them from your vocabulary. If you are frustrated with a child’s behavior, be specific and purposeful with your words instead of using absolute statements. In a calm manner, explain to them what it is they are doing that upsets you. They may have a reasonable explanation and together you can solve the problem and move forward. Absolute statements are more

revealing about the character of the person saying them. Avoid using them with your spouse and children.

“I’m busy...”

When you are preoccupied and your child keeps seeking your attention, give them a time limit. Advise them how much longer you will be busy and that you will then spend time with them. Perhaps they have a real emergency that requires your immediate attention. Take note of what they are saying if only for a second, so you know how to respond. If you are overwhelmed, you can refer them to your spouse or a friend so they can get the attention they require. Constantly ignoring them for insignificant activities makes them feel insignificant.

Our words are very important, especially when communicating with those we love. Words hold power and reveal our character. Choose wisely the phrases that you use with your children daily. Remove vocabulary that demeans or labels your child.