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Speak with Care!

Dear Parents,

We need to give children time to grow and mature. God has given us a whole lifetime to do that. Be a bit more patient with your children and don't rush to pass judgments and conclusions. Children feel labelled and branded at that point.

Verbal abuse is words charged with negative emotions pronounced onto a person, causing emotional damage and behavioural disturbances. Choosing words at the brink of a frustrated moment is not easy.

As parents who want to be better, you have the choice of being silent at provocative moments. Use pleasant words that would lift them up. Solomon admonishes that pleasant words are like balm that soothes. Paul writes to the Colossian Christians to be gracious in their speech, and to season it with salt which I believe is words of encouragement, appreciation and gentle confrontation with lots of care (Col 4:6). Proverbs 15:4 prompts us to

use ‘tasty’ dialogues. You wouldn’t have missed the warning on some cardboard boxes. ‘Fragile, Handle with care!’ Children are even more precious and fragile. Enjoy the roses without crushing them. Listen to them and don’t block the communication by the utterance of rocky words.

What you say and what you don’t say are both important. Proper speech is not just saying the right timely words; it’s also controlling our tongue to not say what we shouldn’t. Satan uses the tongue to pull down homes. Damaging words once spoken speed destruction quickly and deeply and no one can stop the results. You cannot unscramble scrambled eggs. Spilt milk is spilt. Scars remain even after sincere apology for careless words.

Keep your words and promises so you can be trusted.

It’s humanly possible to control the boneless tongue. It’s better to fight fire than to go around setting new ones (Js 3). Promise yourself to say two powerful words everyday which will boost your kids’ esteem.

Paul, in Ephesians 6:4, pleads with the fathers not to ‘exasperate’ and ‘provoke’ children. He warns about ‘coarse joking’ in Eph 5:4 which is teasing, calling names and mocking at the weaknesses of children. Parents ought to protect the feelings of vulnerable kids, as the world around is nasty and bad.

“A harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov 15:1). Children become rebellious and allow roots of anger and bitterness to creep in and carry it on as they parent kids. Beware!

Words have power. They can build your children or break them to pieces. They can strengthen them or shatter them. Wounds seat themselves deeply in their hearts and take ages to fade off.

Angry and abusive words come from a heart filled with anger and frustration — while your feelings are understood with respect; you also have to remember that it goes with so much force and makes your children bleed.

True that your marriage, deadlines, unmet needs, unrealistic expectations and personalities push you to throw strong and ungauged words. Please don't act them out on your children, whether grownups or kids. They understand the intensity with which it comes.

You might have learnt it from your parents, teachers or from the society you come from. You probably are still carrying the pain of the wounds that were hurled at you. If you are struggling to come to terms with them as yet, seek help or read the 'Post a Question' column on my website (www.bettereverydaycounseling.com)

Oftentimes we don't realise that we are actually being abusive to our children. There are times when though we know, we don't sit to reflect the impact it could have had on children. The best way is to ask our children periodically, unhurriedly, in a quiet scenario, if anything we've said or not said, hurts. Children are intelligent. They see through you. They will tell you, if they know for sure that you are ready to receive the hard truth.

Anger breeds and will not stay still. Deal with your anger and keep it on reins. It's possible! (Js 3). When

children or circumstances frustrate you and drive you mad to throw charged words, wait till your feelings are cool. Use then gentle words, take your children aside and talk to them about the reasons for your anger. Appreciate and encourage them before you state the criticism or the correction. Help your children gently to see their shortcomings with a vocabulary that will give them a hope and an enthusiasm to work at change.

Children love you. Please love them in return — not just in your heart, show it by words, for a change! Don't ever lash out! Seek to encourage and build! Remember a good word you had received in your lifespan from your parents, aunt or uncle — thank God for them!

Children learn from you. You are moulding a generation from within the walls of your home.

Wear a new attire and let your kids enjoy the change!

A co-parent and a daughter with love,
Evangeline