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What's Bothering You?

I am angry when my parents throw abusive words at me. How can I handle this situation?

Dear,

Thank you for trusting me with your hurts. Yes, I understand that it's very painful to hear such demeaning words from your parents and others whom you look up to.

You come across as a helpless person who is hurt, angry, guilty and revengeful. You are not in control of what is bombarded at you as the words come from a higher plane, from people in authority.

I respect your feelings and the hurt that you have suffered is not denied. The way you respond to these words make all the difference. Don't react, but respond. Your perceptions of the abusive words and from where they come can be discoloured. Are you aware that you can

have the strength in you to colour your perceptions rightly and positively? If you feel that some words, though hard, are true, you can consider action on them.

When the authority figures, in this context, are definitely in the wrong, don't do anything at the time when feelings of yours and parents are sensitive and high strung. Calm down and ask God for clarity. To calm down, try counting upto 100 or take a slow-paced long walk along a less crowded lane. Take the message of the abuse positively, and actively ignore the rest like how we strain tea dust.

Make that conscious choice not to dwell on what was pronounced on you. Differentiate, if the guilt you carry is false or real. Take change seriously if the guilt is real.

These words will be wholly true only when God speaks them to you. For example if you are called a 'fool,' 'useless,' 'idiot' by your parents, it would never become true, unless God calls you so, which He would never do.

Joseph was abused physically, teased as the dreamer, mocked and was sold out as if he was a commodity. The Bible has no record of Joseph reacting, being revengeful or even talking back to his brothers who had the worst of attitudes.

God fought for him in His own way, in a way he would have never dreamt of and turned his world around. His abusive brothers had to bow down before his lofty, not-talking-back attitude with shame and fear. God honours submission. "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." "Be still and know that I am God" (Ex 14:14; Psa 46:10). Give God a chance to fight for you.

Relax. Take heart. Be thick-skinned and strong. Nothing can happen to you beyond what God allows. Learn to face life situations boldly. Don't allow circumstances to crush you.

Work in the opposite spirit: i.e. 'Abuse vs. Love.' Use loving and respectful words to your parents. It will make them think. This is easier said than done. But it's possible.

Understand the background and the upbringing your parents might have had. They probably had an abusive home. Most of our behaviours are learnt. Forgive them. Hurt people hurt.

Decide that you'll never use these spirit-crushing words on anyone, even on yourself.

Wounds take long to heal. Band-aids and pat answers like, "Don't worry," "Everything will be alright," "You should not feel like that," don't dress the wounds rather they add fuel to the fire.

I encourage you to boldly seek help either from a mature believer or a Christian psychologist, who will help you cope with the stress.

I've written to your parents about your pain. They deserve another chance!

— Your friend



Dear Parents,

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. 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.

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. King Solomon says that pleasant words are like balm that soothes. Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians to be gracious in their speech (Col 4:6) and to season it with salt which I believe is words of encouragement, appreciation and gentle confrontation with lots of care. 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 bring destruction and no one can stop the results. You cannot unscramble an egg. 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 Ephesians 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 they go with so much force and make your children bleed.

It is 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 grown-ups or kids. They understand the intensity with which they come.

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).

Often, 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 life span 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.

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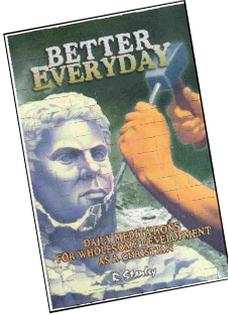
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