

Use positive, honest comments such as:

- 🌸 I'm impressed by how hard you have worked on that.
- 🌸 It was lovely to see you so happy while you were doing that.
- 🌸 I like the colours you have used.
- 🌸 You should be proud of yourself for finishing that. I'm proud of you!

These comments say clearly what it was you liked in the child's behaviour or work. This will help them feel good and be more confident the next time.

When children recognise that they can do some things well, they may cope better when things go wrong. If they don't, be understanding and patient. It takes a lot of experience and encouragement for any of us to deal with disappointment.

The message we give our kids needs to be that trying as hard as you can is more important than getting it right.

“Children see, children do...”

Children are experts at watching you closely and copying what you say and do. Be a good example to your child by always speaking respectfully.... Make your influence positive!

For more parenting information and support:

Parentline ACT	(02) 6287 3833
Parentline NSW	1300 1300 52
Parentline NT	1300 30 1300
Parentline QLD	1300 30 1300
Parent Helpline SA	1300 364 100
Parenting Line TAS	1300 808 179
Parentline VIC	13 22 89
Parenting Line WA	1800 654 432

Parenting lines provide a telephone service providing information and good ideas about caring for babies and children.

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NAPCAN is an independent charity and the leading advocacy body for prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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Despite the old saying “Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me”, we know that children can be harmed by adults speaking to and talking about them in negative ways.

Children need to hear that the adults in their lives think they are OK. Parents can help children feel good about themselves by the way they speak and the things they say. Hearing positive things helps children feel more confident and helps them try even harder to gain our respect and approval.

When adults use helpful and supportive words towards children, the children feel loved, worthwhile and confident.

Children who feel loved and valued are more likely to:

- Be confident to try new things
- Recognise and be pleased when they do well
- Value and respect themselves and others
- Feel hopeful and optimistic about the future
- Enjoy going to school
- Take part in sport and other activities
- Enjoy being healthy



Don't use negative words

Mostly, when adults use negative words speaking to children, they are actually talking about the behaviours they don't like, not the child. However the child hears the hurtful words as being about them and this can make them feel bad and worthless. They often show this by behaving badly, but adults may not realise that the bad behaviour is a response to the hurtful words the child heard.

A useful way for adults to stop using negative words to children is to consciously separate the child from the child's unacceptable behaviour. The child needs to get the message “I'll always love you, but it is your behaviour we need to talk about”. Children need to know that their adults love them no matter what and that their love does not depend on the child's behaviour.

Be truthful

It is important for adults to be truthful to children, but do it tactfully, just as we would talk to adults we care about. Children know when they have not done well and do not appreciate it when adults praise bad work.

