

From
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From

Chapter 1 – *Children Believe Everything You Say* – pages 11 – 13

Small children listen, absorb and believe everything their parents say. As they grow older they might not listen as well or believe *everything* you say, but they will still absorb it. If there is much shouting or verbal abuse in the home it will teach the children that this is an appropriate form of communication. (Studies have shown that children from verbally abusive homes are much more likely to become verbally abusive themselves than children from non-abusive homes.) Children will also absorb – and sometimes even take literally – abusive language that is not necessarily *meant* to be abusive. For example, “He’s such a pain!” or “She’ll be the death of me!” recent studies have also shown that such language can actually contribute to physical ailments.

When I became aware of this, a number of years, a number of years ago, I had been suffering from acute neck pains on a regular basis. Various treatments helped but nothing cured it. I began to keep a journal every time I suffered these neck pains. Soon a pattern became apparent and I discovered that my neck pains were always most acute after meetings with a certain colleague of mine. I examined my thoughts about him and realized (to my amusement) that I had been thinking of this man as a “pain in the neck”. Once aware of the imagery I had been carrying around, I was able to change it. Eventually the pains disappeared!

Much of the imagery we project into our children is fear-based. However it doesn’t have to be. We can change the way we express ourselves. It may take a little time and some practice, but seeing the difference it can make to our children makes it well worth the effort!

You can change the way you say something, using *positive* imagery to replace negative or fear-based imagery. Read through the following list of negative remarks and the suggested positive alternatives. Make your own list of negative remarks and see if you can find a positive way to rephrase each one.

Be careful or you’ll fall down and hurt yourself.
Hold tight and you’ll be safe.

If you don’t study hard you’ll fail.
If you study you’ll pass all your tests.

You are driving me crazy!
I am becoming agitated by your behaviour.

Team up with a friend or your partner and keep a notebook or diary of each other’s language for one week. Jot down all the negative and fear-based language you hear your partner using. At the end of the week, get together and compare notes. Discuss how you can best help each other to adjust to more positive phrasing. Such support is vital to effective change. Once your own awareness increases involve your children too. Ask them for suggestions on how to improve phrasing, and look for

ways to create family language awareness. Make it a team effort. Avoid 'lecturing' or 'telling' your children – after all, most of their negative language was probably picked up from you or another adult! The best teacher is always *example*.

Once your awareness of language is heightened, you will discover an increase in your awareness of the images you carry in your mind and the images you project onto others and the future. As you develop this new awareness, a new world opens up to you, a world in which you can take charge of your life and help your children take charge of theirs.