A Newsletter of WV Birth To Three Regional Administrative Unit 7

BRIDGES

Early Intervention….Building Bridges for a Bright Future

WINTER 2023

Words Have Power and They Can Hurt

How common is verbal abuse? Reports are mixed. A study at the University of New Hampshire found that **63 percent of more than 3,000 American parents surveyed reported one or more cases of verbal aggression toward children in their homes**.

What percentage of children are verbally abused? Two in five children **(41%)** experience harmful verbal abuse by adults around them, reveals groundbreaking new study.

Can yelling at a child cause trauma? Severe verbal discipline has been associated with conduct problems in children and adolescents. It may also lead to higher physical aggression, delinquency, and interpersonal problems. **Over time, verbal abuse can be traumatizing for children and adults alike**.

What does yelling do to a child's brain? Yelling can **trigger a stress response in the brain, inhibiting emotional and logical functions over time**. It can lead to the internalization of negative beliefs in children, affecting their self-esteem and self-worth.

Children were asked what words were the most hurtful and upsetting. The top five are:

1. 'You're useless'
2. 'You're stupid'
3. 'You can't do anything right'
4. 'You're worthless'
5. 'I'm ashamed of you'

All children need compassion, connection, acceptance and love. They need consistency and positive, supportive words to develop trust and emotional security. When a child is constantly shamed, disgraced, told over and over again that they are stupid or no good, or compared negatively to others, they can find it very difficult to overcome their resulting feelings of worthlessness, guilt, indignity and hopelessness. A child's belief in who they are is formed by the opinions of their parents, caregivers and adults in positions of power, such as teachers. When these adults treat them with respect, they learn to respect themselves.

It's never too late to change. Listening to a child and apologizing to them can be the first step to take from rupture to repair.

Positive words can have a huge impact on a child's feelings about themselves.

According to the children surveyed, the top five most helpful and encouraging words are:

1. 'I am proud of you'
2. 'You can do it'
3. 'I believe in you'
4. 'I'm here for you'
5. 'It's OK to make mistakes, you can learn from them'

"Words carry so much power with children – we all need to build them up, not knock them down."

Excerpts taken from The Hurtful Words Adults Use That Harm Children The Most | HuffPost UK Parents (huffingtonpost.co.uk)

What is verbal abuse? - Words Matter

The Daddy Factor: How Fathers Support Development

Dads matter - a lot! The relationship between father and child has a deep impact on a child's overall and long-term healthy development. Let's take a look at some of the important ways Dad make a difference.

- **School and Career Success** - Children whose fathers are involved in their daily care tend to be more confident; and, as they grow older, enjoy stronger social connections with peers. Fathers who care for, nurture, and play with their babies raise children with higher IQs and with better language and cognitive skills. The more time fathers spend in enriching, stimulating play with their child—such as playing pretend or sharing stories—the better the child's math and reading scores are at 10 and 11 years old.
- **Healthy Risk-Taking** - The rough-and-tumble kind of play that fathers engage in with young children helps regulate their feelings and behavior. It teaches children how to deal with aggressive impulses and physical contact in socially acceptable ways. While mothers are more likely to form secure attachments by comforting their children when they are distressed, fathers are more likely to provide security in the context of the controlled excitement of play or discipline. This helps children learn where the boundaries of safety and risk-taking exist in the world - a very important skill that builds self-regulation and can prevent problems with aggression and violence later on. Fathers push children beyond their comfort zone - in the best ways. Dads, typically more than moms, encourage their children to take calculated risks: trying the deep end of the pool, talking to someone new, or finding ways to overcome obstacles.
- **Managing Emotions** - Children with involved fathers tend to be more patient; and, when they are older, they can handle the stresses and frustrations associated with schooling more easily than children with less involved fathers. Children of involved fathers are less likely to get in trouble at home, in school, and in the neighborhood, and they are less likely to experience depression. Fathers who are actively involved in their babies' lives tend to experience less conflict with their wives. This not only benefits children; it strengthens the parenting relationship which also has long-term benefits for children.

The Benefit is Mutual - Fatherhood is life-changing, for dads and for babies. As tiring as being a Dad is at times, all those moments add up to a lifetime of love and connection.

- **Cues for Caregiving** - We know moms' hormone levels change during pregnancy. So do Dads'! Scientists say both parents experience a rise in the hormone prolactin around the time of a baby's birth. Prolactin promotes child-caring behaviors in both parents.
- **The Love Hormone** - Here's something to smile about: bonding time with your baby activates the circuits in your brain that are also involved in falling in love. When a dad has skin-to-skin contact with his baby, he releases oxytocin - the love hormone. Babies' oxytocin levels rise, too. (Skin-to-skin contact between moms and babies has the same effect.)
- **Brain Rewards** - MRI images provide more evidence that men's priorities change when they have kids. Brain scans of fathers and non-fathers showed that the reward-sensing region of dad's brains lit up when they saw pictures of toddlers. Not so in the non-dads.

Getting Involved: Advice for Fathers

- **Before Baby Arrives**
  - * **Talk, read, and sing to your baby-to-be** - Babies can hear during the second trimester of pregnancy, and recognize voices in the third trimester—including yours!
  - * **Attend doctor's visits as much as you can** - During Ob/Gyn checkups, you will be able to see your baby's growth and development. These opportunities to track your baby's development help you both begin to feel connected to your little one even before their birth day.
  - * **Try a class for expectant parents** - Classes will help you prep for parenting (diaper changing, feeding, keeping baby healthy and safe), as well as cover strategies for how to co-parent with Mom.
  - * **Support healthy habits** - Your encouragement helps mom eat the right foods and avoid smoking and drinking during pregnancy.
  - * **Be there for labor and delivery** - Both moms and dads naturally worry about the labor and delivery process. Some dads say they worry about doing the wrong thing in the delivery room, seeing their partner in pain, or being left out of important decisions. But they show up in big numbers and most are glad that they did. Moms report that having their partners in the delivery room reduces their anxiety and pain. And many dads find that meeting their baby right after birth is an experience that changes them forever—and helps them bond with their babies from those first seconds. Dads who play an active role during pregnancy lower moms' stress levels. And lower stress means a healthier environment for your growing baby.

Continue on next page...

- **Once Baby Arrives**
  * **Continue the conversation** - You've been talking, reading, and singing to your baby for months. Now enjoy seeing their responses for the first time!
  * **Figure out how to share responsibility for the baby** - New dads can do almost everything new moms can do: Change diapers, give baths, share stories, and take your turn walking and soothing when the baby is crying. If your partner is breastfeeding, you can participate by bringing the baby to her, or burping them when their done. Sharing these responsibilities right from the start gives you a chance to get to know your baby and builds a strong foundation for your relationship with them.
  * **Pay attention to your baby's cues** - Over time, babies develop their own ways of telling you want they need—through a particular cry, look, or movement. By spending time caring for and playing with your baby, you'll start to decode those cues.

Adapted from https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/the-daddy-factor-how-fathers-support-development/

"My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me."

- Jim Valvano

"A father is neither an anchor to hold us back nor a sail to take us there, but a guiding light whose love shows us the way."

- Unknown

"Anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad, and that's why I call you dad, because you are so special to me. You taught me the game and you taught me how to play it right."

- Wade Boggs

Here are 10 Cold Weather Safety Tips to Protect Children:

1. **Layer up!** Bitter cold and snow can cause frostbite. Dress your child in several layers, and make sure their head, neck and hands are covered. Dress babies and young children in one more layer than an adult would wear.
2. **Play it safe.** Even when roads are closed to traffic, it's not safe to play or sled in the street. Visibility may be limited due to snowbanks and ice on the roads makes braking difficult.
3. **Beware of clothing hazards.** Scarves and hood strings can strangle smaller children so use other clothing to keep them warm.
4. **Check in on warmth.** Before kids head outside, tell them to come inside if they get wet or if they're cold. Then keep watching them and checking in. They may want to continue playing outside even if they are wet or cold.
5. **Use sunscreen.** Children and adults can still get sunburned in the winter. Sun can reflect off the snow, so apply sunscreen to exposed areas.
6. **Use caution around fires.** Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and outdoor fire-pits are cozy but can present danger – especially to small children. Use caution and put up protective gates when possible. If you've lost power or heat and are alternative heating methods like kerosene or electric heaters, be sure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are working.
7. **Get trained and equipped.** Children should wear helmets when snowboarding, skiing, sledding or playing ice hockey. And to avoid injuries, teach children how to do the activity safely.
8. **Prevent nosebleeds.** If your child suffers from minor winter nosebleeds, use a cold-air humidifier in their room. Saline nose drops can help keep their nose moist.
9. **Keep them hydrated.** In drier winter air kids lose more water through their breath. Offer plenty of water, and try giving them warm drinks and soup for extra appeal.
10. **Watch for danger signs.** Signs of frostbite are pale, grey or blistered skin on the fingers, ears, nose, and toes. If you think your child has frostbite bring the child indoors and put the affected area in warm (not hot) water. Signs of hypothermia are shivering, slurred speech, and unusual clumsiness. If you think your child has hypothermia call 9-1-1 immediately.

Excerpts taken from: Winter Safety Tips for Children | Save the Children

May this beautiful holiday season fill your heart with love, your home with joy, and your life with laughter!

We would like to wish our Birth to Three families a

Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Melissa, Vicky, Julie, Savannah, Stacy

Laken and Tammy

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