

Things to Say Everyday

10 WORDS AND PHRASE TO BE USED AT LEAST ONCE A DAY



by Vera Lane and Dorothy Molyneux

Thank you.

It's important to acknowledge your child's efforts to help you or others. You might say: "Thanks for helping me look for that missing sock" or "Thanks for setting the table; I got the salad made while you were doing that."

"Saying 'thank you' communicates that you see and acknowledge your child—a wonderful thing to let him know," says Heidi Feldman, chief of the division of general academic pediatrics at Children's Hospital, in Pittsburgh. "A child is much more likely to try to please a parent who acknowledges his contribution and his thoughtful, helping behavior."

Tell me more.

Words like these show your child that you are listening and that you would like to hear more about what's on her mind. "Tell me more" encourages conversation without passing judgment or giving immediate advice—two responses that discourage further communication from your child.

You can do it.

Your expression of confidence in your child's ability to do many things without your help is important. A toddler can respond to, "You're getting to be such a big boy. Pretty soon you'll be able to get dressed all by yourself." As your child grows older, there will be many times when your encouragement will mean the difference between his giving up on a challenging task to seeing it through.

How can I help?

Let your child know you are willing and available to help her accomplish a particular task that may be difficult for her to manage on her own. You might say: "I think you can read that story by yourself now. Let me know if you need help with a new word."

As your child takes on projects in school, encourage her to think of specific steps that are necessary to complete a project. You both can decide which tasks your child can handle on her own and which ones she'll need help with.

Let's all pitch in.

A child is never too young to learn that cooperation and team effort make many jobs easier and speedier—and often more fun: "Let's all pitch in and finish raking the leaves so we can go in and bake cookies," or "Let's all pitch in and clean up or we'll miss the movie." Family activities and group chores can develop into pleasant rituals that enrich a child's life and create fond memories.

How about a hug?

Don't just tell your child you love him—show him. Research indicates that young children deprived of physical touch and displays of affection often fail to thrive. Tiffany Field, director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami, says this:

"Touch is as essential to the growth and well-being of a child as diet and exercise." As children grow older, they vary in the ways they like us to show affection. Some love to be cuddled, while others prefer a quick hug or pat on the shoulder. It's important to be aware of what your child enjoys most at a particular age.

Please.

After all these years, "please" is still a classic. When you ask a favor of anyone-including children-this "magic word" acknowledges that you are asking for a behavior that will help you and/or make you happy. (P.S. Don't forget to say "thank you" when the job is done.)

Good job.

Good for you. Self-respect and self-confidence grow when your child's efforts and performance are rewarded. Whenever possible, give your child lots of praise. Be sure your praise is honest and specific. Focus on your child's efforts and progress, and help her identify her strengths.

It's time to...

"It's time to get ready for bed," or "do homework," or "turn off the TV." Young children need structure in their daily lives to provide a measure of security in an often insecure world. It is up to you as a parent to establish and maintain a workable schedule of activities, always remembering that children benefit from regular mealtimes and bedtimes.

I love you.

Everyone needs love and affection and a feeling of acceptance and belonging. We can't assume that children know and understand our love for them unless we tell them. "A child must feel very, very loved," says Feldman. "It's one of the most important things." Letting your child know that you love him (and showing him with countless hugs) is important not only in toddlerhood, but as he gets older too.

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