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Ways to Watch Your Words

As parents and children quickly learn, words are powerful. What we say and how we say it affects moods, relationships, and self-esteem.

The Bible provides lots of insight about our words. For example, Proverbs 12: 18 says, "Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing." And James 3:8 says, "No one can tame the tongue." God repeatedly tells us to guard our mouths, knowing the damage they can do.

This month's issue of "The Parent Link" looks into some ways to harness your family's speech and make it pleasant and uplifting. Here are some things to remember as you work toward that goal:

Your example speaks volumes. Children are sponges who absorb everything they hear. If you want them to use acceptable language, monitor your own words and model appropriate talk.

Feelings can be tough to express. When kids vent their anger or frustration through bad language, acknowledge their emotions but help them find better words to use. By overreacting, you could trigger even more inappropriate talk.



Words can offer healing and forgiveness. Teach children how words can hurt other people. When siblings and playmates fight or scream at one another, encourage verbal apologies and hugs to end disputes.

Cleaning Up Our Conversations

In a poll of more than 1,000 American adults, 74% said they're frequently or occasionally subjected to profanity outside the home. And 67% said cursing has increased during the past 20 years.

But there's good news, too. Last year, 14-year-old McKay Hatch started a "No Cussing" club at his school. Before long, the club had more than 20,000 members, who take the following pledge: "I won't cuss, swear, use bad language, or tell dirty jokes. Clean language is the sign of intelligence and always demands respect. I will use my language to uplift, encourage, and motivate. I will leave people better than I found them!"

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help you choose words wisely and avoid outbursts, swearing, and putdowns.
2. To help your children think before they speak.
3. To bless your family with Christlike conversations that encourage and nurture one another.

Parenting Insights

In *With All Their Heart*, Christine Yount Jones says a child's speech is the barometer of his or her heart. She offers these guidelines for inspiring pure hearts that result in pure speech:

- **Encourage children to be an example for others in how they speak.** (See 1 Timothy 4: 12.)
- **Encourage children to understand that their speech is a large part of their testimony for Christ.** (See Titus 2: 7-8.)
- **Encourage children to speak words that help others.** (See Ephesians 4: 29.)
- **If your children use words carelessly, encourage them to say less instead of more.** (See Proverbs 10: 19-20.)

OpenTheBook

**"You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."
James 1:19**

These are wise yet challenging commands for families. When we give our ears a workout and our tongue a rest, our homes become more peaceful places.

Teachable Moments

1. Can You Hear Me

Now?—Play a game of Telephone (whispering a message from person to person) to reinforce the importance of good listening. Afterward, see how the original message was altered and talk about what it feels like to be heard incorrectly.



2. Word Out!—Work to make your home a complaint-free and gossip-free zone. Put everyone in charge of pointing out that kind of talk. Also recognize when family members catch themselves mid-sentence and reword negative statements.

3. Encouraging Words—Jot down on index cards kind words about your children. Once a week, give kids each a card. They can collect—and treasure—these encouragements in inexpensive photo albums.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT

When's the last time your family had a chat about how you talk? Discuss the power of words by pondering these questions:

1. What are some words that put you in a good mood? What are some words that bring you down?
2. What do people think about us based on what we say and how we say it? Do your words show that you love Jesus?
3. What types of sinful talking do you struggle with: cursing? teasing? complaining? other? How can we tackle that problem?
4. What are some ways that we as a family can improve how we talk to one another?

Family Experience: Making "God" Statements

When people built the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), they all spoke the same language. But they also were puffed up with pride. Here's an excerpt from Group's FaithWeaver curriculum that you can use to help family members think about what's behind their words:

Together, build a tower out of LEGO toys, blocks, boxes, or throw pillows. Then brainstorm statements people make that show they're thinking about themselves instead of about how great God is. For example, someone might say, "I'm the best runner in class." Think of things you've actually heard or said yourself. Write the statements on self-stick notes and attach them to your tower.



Say, "Our tower is full of statements people make when they're not thinking about God."

Ask, "Do you notice anything these statements have in common?" (They're all about things people do; they all begin with the word *I*.)

Say, "When we're focused on ourselves, we're not focused on God. Now let's think of ways to turn each of these 'I' statements into 'God' statements. For example, 'I'm the best runner in class' can become 'God gave me good running skills.'"

Replace the "I"-focused notes with new "God"-focused notes. Close by saying kind words about each other. Then have fun by knocking over your tower together.



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *High School Musical 3: Senior Year* (Oct. 24)

Genre: Musical

Rating: G

Cast: Zac Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Tisdale, Corbin Bleu

Synopsis: Seniors Troy and Gabriella face the prospect of separation as they head to different colleges. With the rest of the East High Wildcats, they stage an elaborate spring musical reflecting their experiences, hopes, and fears about the future. New music and dance numbers are designed to take maximum advantage of the big screen. (This is the first *High School Musical* film to debut in theaters.)

Discussion Questions: What song from the movie best reflects your life? What things are you most excited and most scared about now, and why? If you could ask God about anything in your future, what would it be?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Jessica Simpson

Album: *Do You Know?*

Artist Info: Simpson, a pop princess, is the daughter of a Baptist minister. She was in the spotlight with an MTV reality show with then-husband Nick Lachey and now dates NFL star Tony Romo. This is Simpson's sixth album but her first that crosses over into country music.

Summary: This album has mature themes and isn't suitable for younger listeners. Topics include sexual and abusive relationships. "Still Don't Stop Me" contains foul language. "Remember That" makes an alcohol reference. Positive messages include leaving a hurtful relationship, praying, and being emotionally strong.

Discussion Questions: What might it be like to have your life portrayed on a reality show? How does it feel to know that God sees everything you do? What are some ways you can show that you love and believe in Jesus?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Mario Super Sluggers</i>	In this family-oriented baseball game, players choose characters and stadiums. It contains comic mischief.	E; Wii
<i>Madden NFL 09</i>	The popular football game's 20 th -anniversary edition has new features and graphics. The soundtrack has no off-color lyrics.	E; Nintendo DS, Nintendo Wii, PS 2, PS 3
<i>Spore</i>	In this single-player online game, you help a species evolve. It contains comic mischief, fantasy violence, and animated blood.	E10+; Nintendo DS

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Researchers have found that children who have a TV set in their bedroom are more likely to be overweight. They've also recently found that obese children are at risk for liver disease.
- Many birthday parties are now doubling as workouts, where guests get moving. Activities range from swimming and gym time to scavenger hunts and Wii tournaments.

Quick Stats

- In a recent poll, kids valued God's opinion of them (27%) second only to their parents' opinion of them (37%).
(Kidscreen magazine)



- When adults were asked about their most important relationships, 70% chose their family, 19% chose God, and 2% chose their best friend
(Barna Group)

October 2008

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	