



HELPING CHILDREN TO SAY WHAT THEY MEAN

In addition to helping children build a “feelings vocabulary” so they can express their feelings, we adults need to help them say what they really mean.

Children often repeat what they have heard. (That’s why they sometimes say strange or shocking things!) They don’t always know what they are saying or realize the impact their words may have. We can offer alternatives to aggressive, blaming, and inaccurate language. When we do this, we give children powerful tools for building healthy relationships and resolving conflicts peacefully and effectively.

Talk with your child about these examples. Add others from your own experience with your child.

When your child says. . .

- “I hate you!”
- “You’re stupid!”
- “You don’t care about me!”
- “Get away from me!”
- “You’re so mean to me!”

Your child probably means. . .

- “I am angry with you!”
- “I don’t agree with what you are saying/doing.”
- “I am really sad.”
- “I need to be alone.”
- “That really hurts me.”