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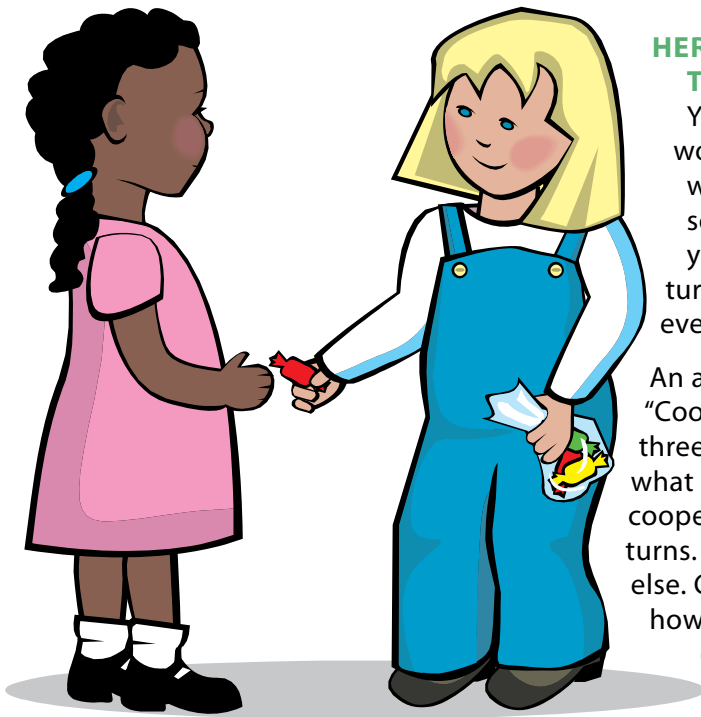
Family Time Work Time

A BALANCING ACT

Building Strong Families

Words are Powerful

WORDS CAN BE VERY POWERFUL. Remember this when talking with your child. Think before you speak. When talking with your child, think about what you are saying. Will your child understand what you really mean?



HERE ARE SOME THINGS ADULTS SAY TO CHILDREN THAT MIGHT NOT BE UNDERSTOOD.

You might tell your young child to be nice. How can the word be defined? It's better to show your child exactly what you mean. If you insist that your child share something, she may not understand what sharing is yet. She needs to be taught and shown how to take turns first. After learning how to do this, your child will eventually be able to comprehend what sharing means.

An adult may say to a young child, "Be polite" or "Cooperate" or "Be safe." What does polite mean to a three year old? Can a two year old really understand what it means to be safe? To understand what the word cooperate means, a child needs to be taught how to take turns. Teach your child how to do something with someone else. Children learn much faster when they are shown how to do something. This is normal. It's how a young child develops and learns new things. Be aware of this. Be patient as your child learns.

Words are Better than Actions

THERE IS THE OLD EXPRESSION, "ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS." This is true, but sometimes actions can be hurtful. You can teach your child how to use words instead of aggressive actions. Don't just say, "Use your words." Demonstrate! Teach your child how.

A child often acts aggressively when another child takes a toy away or when he wants something another child has. Teach your child how to ask for a turn when the other child is done. If another child tries to take something away from him, teach your child to say, "No, I'm not done with that."

You can teach your child how to do this by using toy people-figures or puppets to act out a scene where one hits or pushes another. Then have the toy figures or the puppets show how to solve the problem by talking about it. This is a good way to show your child how using words can prevent the need to hit or push.



Talking with Children

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT. HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN:

- Even before your child can talk, describe what you are doing when you are with her. Do this at meal times, when dressing your child, when playing with your child, and during diapering routines. When doing things around the house, describe what you are doing if your child is nearby. Talk about what you see when riding in the car or going for a walk together. This will help your child learn language.
- When talking about your child with another adult, be careful what you say and what those words may mean to your child. It is best to include your child in the conversation.
- Don't ask your child a question about something you already know the answer to. Instead of asking your child the color of something say, "Tell me something you see that is red."
- Use questions such as "What do you think?" or "Tell me about it." These will encourage your child to talk about something instead of giving one-word answers.
- Have good conversations with your child. Really listen to her and look at her when she is talking. Meal times are good times for family conversations.
- Teach your child how to solve a problem by talking about it. This means naming the problem and then talking about ways it can be solved. When children learn to problem solve, they gain a valuable skill to use all their lives.
- Children think very literally, so be careful how you say something. If you say, "The computer crashed," your child might think it got all smashed up.
- When you need to say "no," do so and really mean it. This will teach your child that you mean what you say.
- Use simple words and short sentences when talking with your child.
- Give the directions one step at a time when asking a young child to do something.
- Be careful not to phrase something as a question when your child really does not have a choice. An example is, "Do you want to put your coat on?" It's better to say, "You need to put your coat on." Another example is "It's time to go to bed, ok?" Eliminate the word ok. It implies that you give your child the choice of saying no.



Family Time/Work Time: August 2008

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