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The power of words

Time _____ to _____ (20 mins)

Equipment needed

- PowerPoint slide 3.7
- Flip chart paper
- Marker pens
- Blu Tack

THE POWER OF WORDS

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

Time Out for Parents Dads

positiveparenting

Slide 3.7

Talk about

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

This is a saying that we often hear – and may say to our children – and yet it is untrue.

Activity

Split the dads into two or three groups and give each group a piece of flip chart paper and a marker pen. Ask each group to draw a line down the middle of their page from top to bottom, then write the heading 'Put down' at the top of one column and 'Build up' at the top of the other. Now ask the groups to write down five statements in each column which they have might have heard as a child or have heard others say.

Give a few examples:

- "Here comes trouble."
- "You're so stupid."
- "I love you."
- "Well done for trying so hard."

Stick the sheets on the wall and ask the groups to comment on which they found the easiest to identify: the put downs or the build ups?

Talk about

Words can be very powerful. They remain with us and can have a huge effect on our self-esteem and personality.

We need to be careful about what we say to our children. Even a family nickname, or something a parent considers to be affectionate, can make a child feel worthless or stupid.

It is also easy to say things like "Why can't you be like your sister?" – especially in a moment of frustration or anger. This can make a child feel that they are not loved as much as their brother or sister.



Similarly, we can damage their self-esteem if we repeatedly speak negatively to a child. For example:

- "You naughty boy."
- "Shut up with your crying."
- "Life would be easier without you."
- "You've got no sense."

Sometimes parents talk negatively about their child in their child's hearing (perhaps thinking that they cannot hear or that it doesn't matter). Children may often look as if they are not listening, but they usually are!

How would a child feel if he overheard his dad saying, "I've had enough of him; he drives me mad."?
How would you feel if you overheard a friend saying the same about you?

Perhaps you would feel unwanted, bad about yourself, or resentful. Your relationship with your friend is bound to be damaged.

How would a child feel if he overheard his dad saying, "He did a great job today and I really enjoyed being with him."?
How would you feel if you overheard a friend saying the same about you?

Perhaps you would feel special, good about yourself, and useful. It is likely that your relationship with your friend will be deepened.

Words are very powerful. With them we can put down our children or build them up, and the effects of both will likely last into adulthood.