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# WHAT WE SHOULDN'T SAY TO OUR CHILDREN

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It can be easy to fall in to the habit of saying 'put-downs' to our children. Things like 'Don't be so stupid' or 'I'll put you into a home' or 'You are always such a nuisance' can be damaging.

In some homes these nasty comments are part of everyday communication. No doubt parents say them when they are feeling frustrated or under pressure or dealing with repeated challenging behaviour.

However, regardless of the stressors, we should avoid remarks which are unkind and can be damaging to the child's self esteem. Hurtful comments can linger in a child's mind. They will take what is said to them in earnest and believe that their parent means it. Imagine the fear for a child when they hear 'I'll put you in a home.' The message to the child who hears that is that they are not wanted, not loved and that they are going to be abandoned. Better to think of the effect before blurting out such remarks.

**Q**

**My husband has never got on with our youngest child and constantly criticises her. She is a sweet natured child but is absent minded and a day dreamer. He is never off her back and tells her she should be like her sister. I can see her mood change when he is around her. She is just turned six and I am afraid this is going to get worse.**

**A**

You are right to be concerned. This persistent stream of negative comparisons will make your daughter feel she is a failure. That sense will affect all aspects of her life from her relationships at home to school work and her ability to socialise. As her parent you need to take on the responsibility for trying to sort this out. If you have already talked with your husband about this and there is no change you will need outside help. He needs to move from his present expectations to treating her as an individual with her own special qualities. That shift may take some time, but it needs to be pursued so that your daughter can flourish in her own unique way and be accepted for who she is.

