

Parenting - Common Phrasing Kids Use

What can children do when the child says:

- “Mine!”

The concept of sharing is something that needs to be learnt. A child’s world often starts with him being in the centre where all the attention is showered onto him. It is especially so with the first child. The first child takes more time to learn how to share because many things – both parents and toys – belong to him ever since he is born. However, those who are born further down the birth order learn how to share at a much earlier stage.

Parents can start teaching children at an early stage on how to share. We can also use a method called Mine Syndrome to teach them responsibilities. Examples for such responsibilities are to keep and clean their own toy after playing and share their own toys with others. Values and concepts can be taught from it.

- “You’re not the boss of me.”

Most children want control over things. When they are instructed to do something, the emphasis is often on what parent wants rather than the child. When the child tries to voice out but are unable to verbalise their needs, they will express their emotions by telling you off.

Parents can try to give the child choices. For example, instead of instructing the child to finish his vegetable, we can let the child have an alternative by letting him choose between broccoli or carrots. While it lets the child know that he cannot get out of eating vegetables, at least he would feel important and more involved in the decision making process.

- “I want it now!”

In the society of instant gratification, children are also not excluded from it. Their insistent and incessant manner of having things they want immediately may tire parents out. This is also known as the “I want it now” and “Are we there yet” syndrome. One way to manage this syndrome is not to say “no” straight away. Saying “no” may continue a cycle where a parent gives in whenever the child throws a tantrum. If the child is able to comprehend, do not give a “no” straight away. Parents can try to say, “It’s fine. You can have it after we do this.”

- “It’s not fair.”

Children view the world in a concrete manner. They think things are either black or white with no shades of grey in between. Most of them tend to use the phrase “It’s not fair” when things do not go the way according to how they perceive things. For instance, the child may say, “It’s not fair” if he wants to go to the beach but the parent is unable to bring him. This does not mean that he feels it’s not fair, but rather he feels disappointed with the situation.

When the child says this phrase, the parent can try to identify the emotions that he is going through and verbalise it for him such by “It’s disappointing

isn't it? Mummy/daddy is disappointed too. What else can we do instead?" or "What is the next best thing you want to do?".

- "You never let me do anything."

Saying absolutes "never" and "anything" are the ways that how children use to generalise things. They may know that it is not true, however, the overwhelming sense of anger or disappointment blocks out their information. This is not only for children. Adults also feel guilt of doing the same thing and telling our spouse or partner in absolute terms such as "you are always like that" although we know it is not true.

Instead of getting into a tussle with your child, make it clear that there would be times where you would allow him/her to do something, and that now is not the time. While doing so, reinforce the reason(s) as to why you need to stop him/her from doing it this time. Allow the child to sulk and feel sad / disappointed.

- "I don't like you."

Children we know are reactive and tend to generalize. So when they face something that they are unhappy about, they would draw on some experience they have and articulate in the way that they know. Hence, if they are upset with being scolded, they may not have the capability in expressing the negative emotion appropriately. Instead, they may target the person that did the action, and vent it on their friends, teachers and parents.

Bear it mind that children are talking about the situation that they are upset about and how they feel about it. Do not take it personally but rather try to identify the situation and the feeling. Parents can say something like, "I can see you are angry. There is a reason why mummy/daddy does not allow you to play/do something. Can you tell me why?". Once we realise that it is not us children are upset about, it makes easier to teach or reason with the children.

Sometimes, parents do not know how to react to the children. As such, they may get frustrated. This is quite common. However, children go through some learning stages to learn different values and ideas when they are taught in a different way. Telling children simply "no, no, no" will not give opportunity to learn anything.

The suggestions listed above are not easy, and would take time to implement for them to be effective. Unfortunately, many parents often do not have much time. However, imagine that if a little more time was spend on the child, and parents can have a peace of mind, the extra 10-15 minutes would beat frequent cycles of arguing on hours on end. The challenge is to stop ourselves from being reactive first.

Here at The Therapy Room, a team of psychologists – led by Geraldine Tan, the principal psychologist – conduct parenting workshops and programmes. For more information, please click [here](#) to see the upcoming parenting events. In addition, Geraldine Tan is also experienced in working with many parents

and children through therapeutic interventions. Should you have any inquiries or concerns, please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.