

Five Powerful Things Kids Need to Hear from Their Father

by Esther Jantzen, Ed.D.

Dear Dads,

This is a grandmother speaking. I have a bit of advice about raising children, if you're open to hearing it.

I know you had hard times growing up. Maybe your father was nice to you, maybe he wasn't. Maybe you knew him well, maybe you didn't.

Your kids will have hard times, too—they'll have disappointments, fear, hurt, shame, uncertainty, anger. We all do.

But never, ever underestimate the importance of a father to kids.

I'll give you five statements that children need to hear from their father. Face-to-face is great, if possible, or on the phone, in a letter, or in some other way. These words help give kids emotional strength.

You might not use exactly these phrases, and you wouldn't use them all at once, but please make sure your child gets the message behind these powerful words.

1. "I'm proud..." you're my son or daughter. You can say this out of the blue; it does not need to be connected to any achievement, although it could be. They'll also get this message when you say, "I notice ... how your drawings are changing ... how you seem happier... or how you're doing better at school."

2. "It's okay... How can you learn from that?" Use this when there's been a mistake or problem. It teaches kids it's normal, necessary, and perhaps even healthy to make mistakes. We all do. The important thing about a mistake is what you can learn

from it. If you can learn from it, the guilt and hurt often go away.

3. "I'm sorry..." for ____. Fill in the blank. Maybe it would be... for yelling at you the other night... for missing your ball game... for not keeping my promise. When adults apologize, kids learn how to clean things up between people, and that's something they need to know. And, of course, the best apology is changed behavior.

4. "Tell me more..." or "Yes, and what else?" These words let a kid know you're listening, you're interested and you'll give them your attention and time. These words encourage them to develop and express ideas. Believe it or not, they can help kids gain skills that are useful in school. And, of course, be sure you listen when they talk.

5. "I love you forever." Even if you're mad as heck or live far apart from your kids, they need to know you're behind them, you love them for no reason except that you're connected as father and child forever. Your love is their birthright.

And one more thing: Dads, if for any reason you've never heard these things from your father, say them to yourself. That works, too.

With love,

Grandma

Besides being a Grandma, Dr. Esther Jantzen, is a children's literacy advocate, the creator of the [Way To Go! Family Learning Journal](#) and the author of [Plus-It!](#) For more ways you can help kids succeed visit www.jantzenbooks.com or www.whatkidsneedtosucceed.com