

## Beware of Boomerang Words

by Kathy Slattengren

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Do your children's words ever take you by surprise because they sound remarkably like something you've said? These "boomerang words" can be a good thing or not such a good thing.

When we hear our children repeat our words, it's a strong reminder of just how much they are picking up from us. We also get a new appreciation for how those words feel to the person receiving them!



### Where have I heard that before?

One mom told me that she was in her 6-year-old daughter's bedroom when she accidentally knocked a toy off her dresser. Her daughter exclaimed "*Mom, next time could you be a little more careful!*" This mom was taken aback by this rather rude sounding comment.

Sadly she realized her daughter had learned these precise words from her. She remembered how often she reminded her daughter to be more careful when she made a mistake. Hearing these words directed back at her, she understood how harsh they sound. She's now working on showing empathy when her daughter accidentally spills something instead of admonishing her to be more careful in the future.

### Repeating Familiar Phrases

When his children had problems, John often responded to them "*Well, it's not the end of the world.*" This phrase came back to haunt him one night when they were out camping in a trailer.

It was dark and he was tired. The last thing he planned to do before going to bed was set up the coffee pot for the next morning. Unfortunately the entire can of coffee spilled. He was angry! John then heard his daughter proclaim "*Well, it's not the end of the world.*"

He did not find these words at all comforting or helpful. It dawned on him that his daughter probably felt the same way when he said those words to her.

### "Because I said so!"

Lucy vividly recalled a turning point in her relationship with her mom over 50 years ago. She was graduating from 9th grade and asked her mother if after the graduation ceremony she could spend the afternoon at a lake with some of her girlfriends. One of the other mothers was driving them to the lake and bringing lunch. Her mom replied "*You're not going.*" When Lucy asked her mom why she couldn't go, her response was "*Because I said so.*"

Lucy was enraged with her mother's explanation. She angrily told her mother that she planned to go to the lake with her friends despite the fact her mother told her she couldn't go. When her mother asked for an explanation, Lucy replied "Because I said so." Lucy did go to the lake with her friends that day. Her relationship with her mother remained cool and unaffectionate for many years.

### Speak to Your Children as You Would Like Them to Speak to You

If we want our children to treat us with respect and compassion, then we need to begin by treating them

that way. For example, instead of trying to end a discussion with "*Because I said so.*", a better approach is to carefully listen to a child's request and ask questions to address any concerns before deciding. Providing respectful, thoughtful explanations for decisions helps maintain good relationships with our children even when the decision isn't the one they wanted.

What we say to our children affects what they say to others. Choose your words carefully so when they boomerang back from your children you'll be happy to hear them!

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