

## What's the tone of your home?

by Kathy Slattengren

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Parents play a lead role in setting the overall tone in their families. Parents whose overall tone tends to be negative often have homes filled with stress and tension. While parents who take a more positive approach create calmer, happier homes.



### A Home Filled with Tension

One mom told me about all the stress in her home. One of her three sons was doing very poorly in school. She and her husband were constantly nagging Joe to do his homework although it didn't seem to help much. Sometimes Joe even skipped school and they responded by yelling at him and grounding him.

However, Joe would leave the house even though he was grounded. Home was not a welcoming place for Joe. This family turned things around when they made the tough decision to let Joe worry about his homework and grades instead of them. When they stopped nagging him, he started spending more time at home and he actually began taking more responsibility for his homework.

### Replacing Negative Statements with Positive Statements

Sometimes parents get in the habit of interacting with their children using negative statements and commands. Read the following statements one dad made to his children and think about how you would feel if you were a child hearing these remarks:

- "You aren't going outside until you put sunscreen on."
- "Stop messing around with that!"
- "If you don't hurry up and get your shoes on, I'm not taking you."
- "You've already watched too much TV. You should not have turned it on again, now turn it off."
- "You're not eating dinner until you wash your hands."
- "You are dawdling and we're going to be late!"
- "Stop bugging your sister!"

How do you feel after reading these statements?

Let's look at how these same ideas could be expressed more positively:

- "Feel free to go outside as soon as you put sunscreen on."
- "That could break so you can play with this instead."
- "I am leaving in two minutes. I'll be happy to take you if have your shoes on."
- "Your TV time is up for today. Would you like to turn the TV off or would you like me to turn it off?"
- "Please wash your hands and then join us for dinner."
- "We're leaving in 5 minutes. Do you plan to be dressed or will you be taking your clothes in a bag?"
- "Your sister wants to be left alone right now. Do you want to play a game with me or go outside and play?"

How do you feel now? The words we use make a huge difference!

### **Results of Positive Statements**

When we use more positive statements we demonstrate confidence that our children are likely to choose appropriate behavior. If we instead use a lot of nagging, ordering and yelling, we convey to our children that we feel they are likely to mess up if we're not constantly on top of them - not quite the message we want to send!

By getting in the habit of positively stating requests, you will make the overall tone of your family more encouraging and optimistic. This is an essential ingredient in making your home a warm, welcoming place for everyone.

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