

Children need consistency

By VALERIE CUNNINGHAM
Georgetown Parent-Child Centre

We talked a few weeks ago about boosting the child's self-esteem, and that we often blurt out unkind negative words even when we know better and mean well. Nevertheless we cannot help but wonder what effect it has when we shout, "You stupid kid... you've done it again!"

We know that the consequences of this behavior include: a demoralized parent, a diminished sense of competence and a ruined vision of saintly, caring, loving parent. Probably the child does not feel good either if the only message he/she hears is a critical negative one. Perhaps she sees herself as stupid, incompetent and worthless. So now what can you as a parent do?

First: Forgive yourself. If you even bother to read this column you are probably an excellent parent most of the time.

Second: Boost your own self-esteem by whatever means works. (Recall the suggestions in the previous column.)

Third: Remember: "The child is resilient. It is the total number of reflected messages, combined with the intensity that affect self-image." (Dorothy Corkille Briggs; Your Child's Self-Esteem: The Key to His Life.)

If the child sees that you can forgive yourself, then he figures maybe there is hope that you can forgive him too. If you let go of negative messages from your own childhood that no longer apply to you, then your child can learn to dismiss the negative messages you occasionally deliver.

If most of the messages you deliver are positive and sincere, then those are the ones that your children will remember.

It is your consistency, predictability and daily competent caring that give your children their self-images. The infrequent event of negative parenting will not irreparably scar your children's psyches for life. After all, look at what we remember of their lives when they are grown. We forget about the spilled milk and broken vases, but recall their glowing achievements.

Valerie Cunningham, a paediatric nurse in independent practice, offers a variety of parenting courses, workshops and private consultations. She may be reached at 877-6398.

Prenatal series being offered

Are you expecting a baby this summer?

The Halton Regional Health Department offers an information series for expectant parent! You will benefit the most by attending as early as possible.

If your baby is due in June, July or August, register now for the early prenatal series by calling Georgetown - 877-2238.

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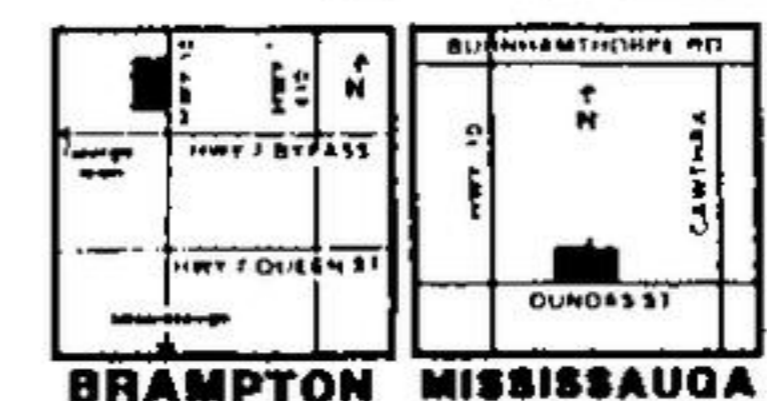
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