

The Detrimental Effects of Verbal Abuse and How to Stop the Cycle

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me."

That's just not true. Name-calling hurts -- especially when the person doing it is a parent, a teacher, or a coach. Yelling and screaming might have been the way you were brought up and you might think it worked for you, so why wouldn't it work for your kids? But did it? Remember how it made you feel. You probably felt belittled, devalued, and insignificant. You certainly don't want your own children to feel that way. It may cause emotional trauma that can result in long-term hurt. Among other things, verbal abuse can undermine your child's self-esteem, damage his ability to trust and form relationships, and chip away at his academic and social skills. Name-calling, swearing, insulting, threatening bodily harm, blaming or using sarcasm are all forms of verbal abuse.

What are the signs that a child is suffering from verbal abuse? They may have a very negative self-image. They may commit acts that are self-destructive, such as cutting, hitting or scratching themselves, as well as other reckless and dangerous activities. They may exhibit physical aggression, be delinquent in school, or display interpersonal problems. They may hit other children, frequently fight with classmates at school, or be cruel to animals. They may also exhibit delays in their social, physical, academic or emotional development.

Recent research suggests that children who suffer from verbal abuse are highly likely to become victims of abuse later in life, become abusive themselves, or become depressed and self-destructive later in life

It's normal for most parents at one time or another to feel frustrated and angry with their children. They may lash out verbally in these instances and say things they later regret. It's when these instances become more and more frequent that there is cause for concern. If this describes you, it's imperative that you seek professional help to learn more positive, meaningful and constructive forms of discipline, and for help in learning methods to control your anger. Remember to give yourself a time out if you feel an outburst coming on. Try to refrain from saying mean, sarcastic or belittling things to your child. Remember, your child learns what he lives. Don't be a bad example and teach him bad behavior early on.

Remember that your child is a precious gift and should be treated with love, kindness, respect and tenderness. If you exhibit these to your child on a daily basis, they will learn what they live and grow to do the same as adults.