

Shaming kids - let's look at alternatives

Complaining to other adults about a child's misdemeanours, within a child's earshot, can be an opportunity for parents to vent and attract empathy, but is it an effective or fair tool to use in shaping a child's behaviour? If a child learns that revealing stories about them are being publicly shared, this can have a negative impact for the parent-child relationship, and it can also affect the child's self-esteem. This behaviour is called shaming.

What constitutes shaming?

- Sharing embarrassing stories about the child in front of the child to manipulate the child's attitude or behaviour.
- Taking what would be a private conversation about behaviour and consequences and sharing it with family, friends, or worse, on social media.
- Making the child feel bad about himself or herself instead of focusing on the actual behaviour that you are attempting to change.

Shame tends to be a feeling that hangs around and can last longer than you think — it erodes trust, tears down self-esteem and damages the possibility of a good relationship. Some phrases that should never be said and will be taken as shaming are:

- 'You're such a bad kid/girl/boy.'
- 'You're just like your mother (or father).' (Separated parents might say this.)
- 'I don't know why I even bother with you.'
- 'Pack your bags, you're going to...'
- 'I'm so tired of dealing with you.'
- 'I can't believe you just did that.'
- 'Stop your crying.'

Alternatives to shaming

On a more positive note, there are many ways to influence your child's behaviour without shaming them. The very best place to start is with the strong bond and relationship you have with them; one of respect and understanding. We all learn from the mistakes we make, in fact, most often that is how we learn. Children learn too from falling down and getting back up and trying again using a different strategy. When your child behaves negatively instead of using shame, have a conversation about their choices and what they can do differently next time. Here are some examples to try:

- 'Tell me what happened.'
- 'What were you thinking about?'
- 'What did it feel like for you?'
- 'What could you have done differently?' (You might need to offer some suggestions.)
- 'What will you do next time?' (Again, you might offer up some ideas).
- 'How can I help you?'

We hope our article has sparked some reflection on the strategies you use when teaching your child. If you are interested in learning more on the topic of shaming and how to avoid it, here are some useful links:

[7 Ways You're Unknowingly Shaming Your Child](#)
[Shaming Children is Emotionally Abusive](#)

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