

Dealing With Sarcasm

Communication is like sitting at a table and passing messages back and forth. Anyone can take a piece of paper and a pencil, write down a message, and give it to anyone else across the table. A sarcastic remark, however, is like handing one piece of paper over the table and another one under the table. It sends mixed signals as the word message is inconsistent with the tone of voice. Family communication may sound like this:

"Yeah, you're too tired to take out the trash but just wait until the phone rings, then we'll see how tired you are." Or, "I worked hard today. I didn't just sit around the house like some people I know." Or, "Sit around the house! I can't believe you. How come you're so smart with a computer but you can't seem to figure out how to work the vacuum cleaner?"

Some people are pretty quick when it comes to cutting others with their mouth. Bad communication habits become ingrained quickly so watch out for the sarcasm trap. A wise parent will hear sarcasm and gently ask questions about the hidden message. "The way you said that communicates that you're angry or frustrated with me?" or "You said 'right' as if you agreed, but I can tell by your tone of voice that you don't believe what I'm saying is true. Is that correct?"

Sarcasm isn't always wrong. Sometimes it's just a way of having fun. Many times, however, sarcasm is a way of stabbing someone in the back. Learn to recognize it and challenge it when it's used inappropriately. Some children and even adults have a lifestyle of using sarcasm. Those patterns can be hard to change, but challenging sarcasm can be a healthy step toward honest communication.

This parenting tip is taken from the book, "Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids."

If you'd like a personalized action plan for your own parenting, consider meeting with Dr. Scott Turansky in a Phone Coaching Session. Learn more at www.biblicalparenting.org.

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