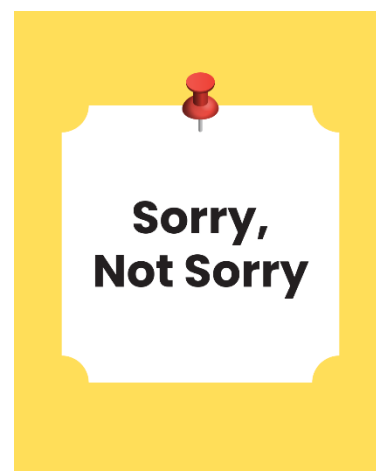


Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

#sorrynotsorry

A nice controversial question for us to tackle this week ... should we make our children say sorry? Here are some thoughts ...

It's worth considering whether there is any value in a forced sorry. When we have to threaten our children with a consequence to make them say sorry, do they really mean it, or are they just saying it to avoid the consequence? Doesn't "sorry" then become a formula to stop further sanctions? Many times I have dealt with an issue between 2 children which goes something like this, "It's not OK to hit people" to which the child replies "but I've said sorry", to which I reply "Thank you for saying sorry, but it's still not OK to hurt other people." Sometimes our children learn that saying sorry might just get them out of trouble, but of course this is not the same as having real remorse for what they have done. What they may be saying is "Sorry I got found out"!



So, where does that leave us? Obviously, we'd love it if when our children behave inappropriately they apologise. Unfortunately for us, the way that children learn most is from watching us. Whether we like it or not, they observe us and copy us in **all** situations, when we're having a good day and remaining patient and kind, but also when we're having a bad day and we lose our temper or fly off the handle too quickly. So how are we doing at saying "sorry"? Is it something we find easy, or do we struggle to do it for fear of "losing face"?

Ideally our homes should be places where we can all learn that sometimes we make mistakes and behave in unhelpful ways, but that we can apologise and move on and try harder next time. Sometimes our children send us over the edge and we know we over-react and discipline too harshly. What if next time that happens, we apologise for our behaviour? "It's not OK that you refused to put your toys away, but I'm sorry that I shouted at you." They may be ready to accept our apology or they may still be cross because we have hurt their feelings. Either way is fine, we've said sorry, we've modelled a respectful apology, it's not our children's job to make us feel better.

Conversely, when our children genuinely apologise to us, we need to accept their "sorry" ***whether we feel like it or not***. That doesn't mean there are not consequences for misbehaviours and the child may need to know that we are still feeling sad or unhappy about what has happened. What it does mean is that we need to be respectful, thank them for apologising and try to move forwards to restore the relationship. After all, we are the grown-ups.

We can encourage our children to problem solve and come up with potential solutions when they know they have behaved inappropriately. "Your brother is feeling sad because you hit him. How do you think you could make him feel better?" Some children really struggle to say the word "sorry". Instead, they may want to give someone a hug, draw a picture, whatever helps to rebuild relationships. We need to recognise when our children are genuinely sorry and praise them for their efforts to make amends. To demonstrate that we can all learn from our mistakes and acknowledge that sometimes part of this process is saying sorry. When we model this to our children, we are showing them that we don't have to be perfect but we do have to take responsibility for our actions.

If you need to get in touch you can email parenting@foundrylaneprimary.co.uk . Have a great Easter break!