

What to say instead of “NO!”

“That’s dangerous!”

“That’s dirty.”

“It will break.”

“I’m tired. Please stop.”

“I don’t like that.”

“People are not for hitting.”

“That’s not safe.”

“The dog might bite.”

“Let’s go over here instead.”

“The car could hit you if you go out into the street.”

“I get scared when you play with wires because you could get hurt.”

“I don’t want to have to clean that up.”

The important thing is to tell your child exactly what the situation is. “No” doesn’t tell the child much. Tell your child how their action will affect them, or how it will affect you. Telling your child how it affects you is called an “I” message. The basic formula for the “I” message is:

“I feel (scared, worried, irritated, etc.) **when** (you climb up high, you hit baby, there’s noise, etc.) **because** (you could fall and get hurt, it hurts baby, I’m in a bad mood, etc.) . **I want you to** (climb only on the couch, touch the baby gently like this, play quietly, etc.) .”

REMEMBER: If you say “No,” your child will learn to say “No.” If you tell your child exactly what the situation is, your child will learn about that situation and your feelings about it. They will learn to talk. They will learn to express their feelings, and to recognize how others are feeling.

Adapted from information from Parents And Children Together’s Hana Like Home Visitor Program.

[Web resources @ www.mrdad.com; fathers.com; fatherhood.org; newdads.com] 12/05

Hawai‘i Coalition for Dads

Promoting involved, nurturing, responsible fatherhood

c/o Parents And Children Together, Hana Like Home Visitor Program, 1485 Linapuni St. #105
Honolulu, HI 96819; 841-2245; Fax: 842-9604; HawaiiDads@pacthawaii.org