

Repair relationships (Apologize)

Children don't get to choose the adults around them. Neither at home, at kindergarten nor at school. They don't get to choose how much time to spend with us either. That is why it is so important that the time we spend with children is intentional and good. How we are as adults affects how children learn, how they develop and how their health is now and will become later.

None of us can always do everything right. We are only human, with good days and bad days. We all have good and bad qualities. So, we probably must accept the fact that we sometimes will fail at being a good adult for children. This doesn't mean that we should just accept our shortcomings and move on. Because the mistakes that we make again and again in our relation to a child can have potential damaging consequences for them. It can affect the child's sense of self-worth. Therefore, we must strive to learn from our mistakes, try to facilitate better, and meet the child and his or her needs wisely. Not to be perfect, but to be good enough.

Fortunately, when we make mistakes, it is possible to repair the relation. We repair so the child can still trust us, want to be good in our presence, and to like themselves. Making amends when we have made mistakes is more important than doing everything right in the first place. Getting used to repairing relations is in fact also beneficial for us. We can become more content with ourselves, we avoid shame, and we can feel more confident in ourselves in relation to others.

Example:

Thinking: "Ugh, this didn't go so well. I see that Sofie was upset by my reaction and the words I said. I guess I don't exactly agree with what she is saying, it's probably a bit exaggerated, but she probably has the right to be angry with me. "

"Sofie, I understand that you were upset and perhaps also angry about what I said. I'm sorry for using such a stern voice and for saying what I said. I shouldn't have done that. Next time I will try to listen better to what you say and be calmer when things like this happen."

As you could hear, the adult shows a good ability to repair. He notices that he has said something that led to a rupture in their relation. He is able to understand the child perceives the situation and how the child perceives him. He tells the child that he noticed her feeling, and that he understands it. He also takes responsibility for the situation by describing his response, and that he regrets it. Finally, he says something about what he wants to try to do differently next time.

Also note that the adult apologizes and says he is sorry without trying to explain himself or adding a "but". Many of us tend to do this: "I'm sorry for doing that, but I was just so stressed out" or "I'm sorry for yelling, but you have to understand that you can't do that". This may make us feel better, but it has nothing to do with a good apology, and it often creates confusion about who is responsible for the situation.

Another typical pitfall is to say you're sorry for the child's feelings: "I am sorry if you were upset". Finally, we will mention that it is not recommended to talk too much about your own feelings: "It hurts inside me when I notice how upset you are because of what I said". In these situations the child can feel responsible for your feelings and that you need to be comforted.

Many of us find this difficult. Taking responsibility and admitting mistakes can feel threatening to our self-worth. It feels easier to pretend like nothing happened and move on. Just hope for the best. However, relations are important to us. Getting used to noticing the ruptures we make in relations, and repairing them swiftly and effectively, is an important investment in our own wellbeing as well as others wellbeing.