

## THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

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Every individual, at the core, is a collection of the values, beliefs, traditions, memories, and experiences that holds their very humanity together. Personal disposition and how our upbringing nurtured us are among the key factors that help determine who we become as a person. Nevertheless, as we grow, we are faced with the challenges of the world, and we encounter much more things that might shake, change, and affect us. All of these challenges remind us that we are humans and we are not immune to the circumstances that arise in our lives.

There is an important point in our lives when we are at our most vulnerable. Children are believed to be like sponges that absorb everything, and thus proper development during early and even up to late childhood are crucial. They are easily affected and swayed by the people around them and the environment where they grow up in. Specifically, the words they hear and encounter every day greatly affect the development of their values, beliefs, morality, ethics, self-understanding, and self-confidence.

Painful or negative words increase Implicit Processing (IMP) within the subgenual anterior cingulate cortex (SACC). It proves that negative language release stress and anxiety-inducing hormones (Richter et al., 2019). Moreover, a study by (Lodge et al., 1998) found a significant increase in anxiety and stress levels when children were exposed to negative self-talk and peer insult and criticisms. Children are still in their developmental stages and thus outside factors – especially mentally and emotionally, easily influence them and their growth. Different studies have also shown that the detrimental effects of

exposure to negative language include the adoption of bad behavior and character. There is also the risk of an increase in self-doubt, feelings of isolation, and depression. Similarly, children who grew up in harsh environments often exhibit poor academic performance and are prone to absenteeism.

While schools, government institutions, and centers offer assistance and counseling to problem children, most do not have actual access to them. It brings to light the importance of doing everything we can to help, no matter how small. Our words are indeed powerful, they can cut down a person easily, but they can also uplift a person and push them into being better. Just like how negative words have poor effects, positive words also harbor positive results. Positive affirmation from others and oneself helps tremendously in changing one's overall mood, personality, and character. An account of why self-affirmations are successful is attributed to their ability to broaden a person's overall perspective and reduce the effect of negative emotions (Sherman, 2013; Cohen and Sherman, 2014). Adults are responsible for providing for the basic needs of children. Additionally, they are tasked with providing them the necessary assistance for psychological, emotional, mental, and social growth and development. While it is physical pain and abuse that leaves cuts and bruises on the skin, sometimes it is the weight of negative words that becomes too much to bear.

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