

# 5

## Things Adults Say to Kids That Turns the Tables on their Relationship



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### 1. "I don't know what to do with you"

Sometimes we don't really know what to do with a child but this statement is a declaration of our incompetence. We are essentially firing ourselves and giving a child very little assurance in being able to trust in us to care for them. We want our kids to feel secure in our care.



### 2. "You hurt my feelings"

Kids are still trying to figure out their feelings without having the added pressure of having to take care of ours. We can help our children understand feelings by focussing on the ones they are having, hiding our own or sharing our feelings with another adult. We alarm our children if we make them responsible for how we feel.



### 3. "How can I help you feel loved by me?"

Adults are meant to be the caretaker to a child so if we have to consult them on how to do this it may convey we really don't understand them or what they need. When it comes to attachment, a child is meant to rest in the relationship and not have to work by telling others how to care for them.



### 4. "I don't want to be around you when you act like this"

When the invitation for relationship is withdrawn from a child because of their behaviour or emotional expression, then they may be alarmed and upset because you couldn't hold onto them. Children need to feel we are there for them, guiding and helping them find more mature ways to express and conduct themselves.



### 5. "What is the matter with you?"

Children often internalize repeated messages they hear about themselves, with messages that are shame based having a lasting impact. They may feel they have to hide part of who they are so that we want to be with them, committing a form of "psychological anorexia," that is harmful.

- \* While many of these five phrases are in popular use, they don't seem to be well thought out in terms of the impact on the adult/child relationship.
- \* A consistent and steady diet of these phrases could court a child to take the lead in their relationship with adults and press down on emotions that are critical to healthy development.