

# Quotes from

## Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids

by Paul Axtell

*We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us, something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals human spirit.*

e. e. cummings, poet

### Preface

*Tell your kids they are fast learners.*

Geoff Colvin, author of *Talent Is Overrated*

### The Original List

Calvin: *Sometimes when I'm talking, my words can't keep up with my thoughts. I wonder why we think faster than we speak.*

Hobbes: *Probably so we can think twice.*

Bill Watterson, creator of the *Calvin & Hobbes* comic

*You can observe a lot just by watching.*

Yogi Berra, Yankees catcher

*Don't worry that children never listen to; worry that they are always watching you.*

Robert Fulghum, American author

### What You Say Matters

*If you want to change your kids, change their playground and their friends.*

Anonymous

*If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain as he is. If you treat an individual as he could be, he will become the person he could be.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German writer

*Each person's life is lived as a series of conversations.*

Deborah Tannen, author of *You Just Don't Understand*

*Prepare them for what life has to offer and how much the world needs them. Just how you taught me.*

Jared, high school senior  
(Advice to his English teacher)

### The New List

*Don't try to change what you're doing. Just notice what you are doing.*

Tim Gallwey, author of *The Inner Game of Tennis*

*The range of what we do is limited by what we fail to notice, and because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.*

Daniel Jay Goleman, American psychologist

### one: I like you.

*Whenever I held my newborn baby in my arms, I used to think that what I said and did to him could have an influence not only on him, but on all whom he met, not only for a day or a month or a year, but for all eternity---a very challenging and exciting thought for mother.*

Rose Kennedy, mother of President John F. Kennedy

*Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind.*

*"Pooh!" he whispered. "Yes, Piglet?"*

*"Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw.*

*"I just wanted to be sure of you."*

A.A. Milne, English author

*You see... apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she was treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will.*

Eliza Doolittle's words to Colonel Pickering in the movie *My Fair Lady*

## **two: You are a fast learner.**

*I really believe in giving young talent a chance. It has been a personal cause of mind to take talented but inexperienced people and throw them into the deep end, and almost every time they deliver.*

Brad Bird, creator of *The Incredibles*

*Always walk through life as if you have something new to learn and you will.*

Vernon Howard, American philosopher

## **three: Thank you.**

*We have to choose to slow down, to actually see the time and space we are in... To truly see people and accept them in their priceless moments.*

Jodi Hills, artist and author

*You can't have a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.*

John Wooden, UCLA basketball coach

*Learning to be gracious is a bit like learning algebra or how to drive a car with a clutch or how to cast a fly rod. It takes practice.*

Paul Axtell, author of *Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids*

*Most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted.*

Aldous Huxley, English writer

## **four: How about we agree to...**

*Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.*

Miguel Angle Ruiz, Mexican author

*Approach the care of your child as a collaboration, not a dictatorship.*

Susan Newman, author of *The Book of No*

## **five: Tell me more.**

*The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention.*

Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk

*But the pauses between the notes---ah, that is where the art resides!*

Artur Schnabel, Austrian composer and pianist

*Just listening without adding to or changing the conversation is what is important.*

Michael Nichols, author of *The Lost Art of Listening*

*Listening requires entering actively and imaginatively into the other person's situation and trying to understand a frame of reference different from your own.*

S. I. Hayakawa, U.S. Senator

## **six: Let's read.**

*The art of reading is in great part that of acquiring a better understanding of life from one's encounter with it in a book.*

André Maurois, French author

*"Tigger is all right, really," said Pooh lazily.*

*"Of course he is," said Christopher Robin.*

*"Everybody is really," said Pooh.*

*"That's what I think," said Pooh.*

*"But I don't suppose I'm right," he said.*

*"Of course you are," said Christopher Robin.*

A.A. Milne, English author

*I don't like that man. I'm going to have to get to know him.*

Abraham Lincoln, 16<sup>th</sup> U.S. president

*"Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore!"*

Dorothy in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*

*So think of your time with your children as a gift—whether reading or playing, listening or talking. It says to your children, "I like you. I like being with you. I enjoy doing things with you. There is no place I would rather be right now than here." And that, too, is a gift.*

Paul Axtell, author of *Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids*

*Remember then that there is only one important time, and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with.*

Jon J. Muth, author and

illustrator of *The Three Questions*

## **seven: We all make mistakes**

*Making mistakes simply means you are learning faster.*

Weston H. Agor, American author

*Good judgment comes from experience, and often experience comes from bad judgment.*

Rita Mae Brown, American author

*You have to come from a place of trust. Trust your kids.*

*Don't make them earn it; start there.*

Paul Axtell, author of *Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids*

*I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.*

Michael Jordan, basketball superstar

*Houston, we've got a problem.*

John L. "Jack" Swigert in the movie *Apollo 13*

*When correcting a child, the goal is to apply light, not heat.*

Woodrow Wilson, 28<sup>th</sup> U.S. president

### **eight: I'm sorry.**

*An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything.*

Lynn Johnston, creator of the comic strip *For Better or For Worse*

*The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.* Lady Dorothy Nevill, English writer

*In the beginning, I would never say I was sorry. My mind would tell me they knew I didn't mean it.*

*Then I got to where I could say it a day or two later.*

*Then I got to where I could say it an hour or so later.*

*Then I got to where I could take it back immediately.*

*Then I got to where I caught myself before I said it.*

Paul Axtell, author of *Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids*

*You can stop any behavior once your mind decides to stop doing it.* William James, American psychologist

*Remember, we all stumble, everyone of us. That's why it's a comfort to go hand-in-hand.*

Emily Kimbrough, author and journalist

### **nine: What do you think?**

*There are two lasting bequests we can give our children. One is roots. The other is wings.*

Hodding Carter Jr., Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist

*His questions were very good, and if you tried to answer them intelligently, you found yourself saying excellent things that you did not know you knew, and that you had not, in fact, known before. He had "educated" them from you by his questions. His classes were literally "education"—they brought things out of you, they made your mind produce its own explicit ideas... The results were sometimes quite unexpected...*

Thomas Merton, author of *The Seven Storey Mountain*

*If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.*

Abigail Van Buren, advice columnist

### **ten: Yes.**

*To say yes, you have to sweat and roll up your sleeves and plunge both hands into life up to the elbows. It is easy to say no.*

Jean Anouilh, French dramatist

*Children have more need of models that have critics.*

Carolyn Coats, author

### **What's Next?**

*One's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes, American jurist

### **Ideas Into Action**

*Do or do not. There is no try.*

Yoda in the Star Wars movie *The Empire Strikes Back*

*Your head is like a bad neighborhood. Don't go there alone.*

Mary Karr, American poet and essayist

*Life rarely runs as smoothly as we'd like. In our minds we harbor the ideal: seamless days of stress-free work, play, and family---leading to nights of long, uninterrupted sleep. The reality of life is much messier than this ideal, but when we step back, sometimes we see that it is also much richer.*

Mary Beth Danielson, *Mothering* magazine

*I do think our intention to be great parents makes a difference.*

Paul Axtell, author of *Ten Powerful Things to Say to Your Kids*