

just say "yes"

Yes. Remember that word? It's the opposite of our favorite word, "no." It's easy to forget about when you hear the expression "Just say no" a hundred times a day. I realize it was coined to help young people deal with the drug and alcohol issue. Now, in that context, I think it's great to just say "no." But I've noticed how often we say "no" or other negative things to kids. I'm not sure that's so great.

In one study, children four and under wore tape recorders throughout the day to determine how much positive input they received. The results were dismal. Something like 85% of what was said to kids was negative: "Don't touch." "Quit that." "Put that down." "Be quiet." "Stop it." "You're such a mess." "Can't you do anything right?"

These days we hear a lot of negative things about our young people: questionable morals, declining scores on standardized tests, overall laziness, a lack of direction, and poor self-esteem are a few items on their list of flaws. Is it any wonder? Maybe if 85% of what we said to our kids was positive, we could change things for the better.

If you have children of your own or have contact with children, why not try the positive? "Yes, you can." "Yes, I'll tell you a story." "Yes, you can try on my lipstick." "Yes, you can invite a friend along." "Yes, I'll look over your homework." "Yes, I'm proud of you." I have a feeling that if even 50% of what our kids heard was positive, it might make a big difference. Of course, it'll take conscious effort and will often be time consuming or inconvenient. I'm certainly not suggesting you

cancel your children's curfew, double their allowance, or let them off the hook about getting decent grades, but I'm betting the payoff from some well-timed affirmatives will be well worth the effort.

I talk a lot about wellness and happiness and quality of life—for kids as well as adults. It is my belief that we can improve the health, happiness, and quality of life of young people (and us older geezers too) by learning to say "yes" more often than "no." Think of it as language karma. If you put out positive energy, it will return to you. So, do as Mother always told you, and "watch your mouth!" When you consider the outcome, it seems like a pretty good idea, yes?