

5 Things Dads Say That Crush Their Sons

“There is no more important and influential voice
in a boy’s life than his father’s.”

BJ Foster | All-Pro Dads
<https://www.allprodad.com/5-things-dads-say-that-crush-their-sons/>

Yesterday, I went home discouraged. When my wife asked me about my day, I told her I was dealing with writer’s block. She asked me what I was trying to write, and I told her I wanted to do an article about things dads say to their sons that absolutely crush them. My son, who was in the room playing video games, said without turning from the screen, “Ha! I can help you write that one.” So I asked him and he proceeded to list off many things I had said to him. Now there are things I have said that were difficult for him to hear but also truthful and necessary. I don’t regret saying those. Then there are some other things I said to him where I was embarrassed and needed to ask for forgiveness.

Our words carry enormous weight. We can either lift them up with words of encouragement, care, and confidence or we can crush them with words of judgment and disappointment. With that in mind, here are 5 things dads say consistently that absolutely crush their sons.

1. “You can’t do it.”

Famed basketball coach Jim Valvano once said, “My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person – he believed in me.” Our sons need to know they have what it takes. Never tell your son that you don’t think he has what it takes to accomplish something. You may find his goal unattainable, but if you don’t believe in him, he’ll never feel good enough.

Affirm: Tell your son you believe in him.

2. “You’re not strong enough.” or “Don’t be a wimp.”

A friend of mine will turn 50 soon. When he was 13, a group of rocks needed to be moved in the back yard. When he told his dad he would move them, his father responded, “No. Those are heavy. Let your brothers do it. You’re not strong enough.” Those words haunted him for decades. If there is one thing boys/men never want to be perceived as, it’s weak. If that is ever communicated to a boy by his father, it will stay with him.

Affirm: Point out to your son when he shows strength. Encourage him to have resolve and celebrate him when he does.

3. “I’m disappointed in you.”

This is one my son mentioned to me. My big mistake was poor communication. It should have been phrased, “I am disappointed in your behavior.” There is a big difference in being disappointed in my son’s behavior and being disappointed in him as a person. However, even when we use behavior in the statement, we need to make it abundantly clear. A big problem I have (and I think many dads have, too) is that it is easier for me to point out the behavior that disappoints than it is to celebrate the behavior that makes me proud of him.

***Affirm:** For every time you point out to your son where he fell short, give him 3-5 areas where he has done well or things about him that you love.*

4. “I’m working on something important. You’ll have to wait.”

We may not use the word important, but that’s what they hear when we consistently keep putting them off. What they hear and experience is that we don’t think they are important. You don’t always have to drop everything for them, especially a conversation with your spouse or other business. However, they need to know that they are important to you and if you are consistently putting them off, it will communicate the opposite.

***Affirm:** Consistently put down what you are doing and do something with your son that he enjoys. Focus on what he is excited to tell you and show enthusiasm.*

5. “If you had done ‘X’, you could have done even better.”

Nothing kills a son more than a dad’s immediate evaluation of his performance. That is the last thing he needs. If he has just failed, he needs to know that your love is not based on his performance. Mourn his loss with him. Let him know you know how he feels and that he isn’t alone. If he has experienced success, celebrate him. More than anything, our sons want to make us proud. Your instant evaluating simply feels like a beatdown.

***Affirm:** Regularly find things your son does that make you proud and tell him.*

Bonus: Nothing.

In moments of hurt and triumph, your son needs to hear from you. It is painful for sons when their dads withdraw when they are needed most. If you have nothing else to communicate, communicate this: you love your son and will always be there for him.

***Sound Off:** What is something you want to tell your son more often?*