

# Does Language influence our attitude to behaviour?

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I was lucky to get a place at the recent Kinship carer event hosted by Children 1<sup>st</sup>.

I was delighted as I love the work of Dr Suzanne Zeedyk, she has an amazing way of helping us understand our children and the importance of connection to help build our children's brains.

Every time I hear her speak or read something she has written I take something different from it. The phrase that had an impact on me at this event was when she changed the description of children's behaviour from "challenging" to "distressed"

This really hit me, and here is why.

I often reflect and share my initial understanding of "attachment issues", (or lack of understanding). When my girls first came to live with me, professionals used the phrase freely. "She has attachment issues"

I didn't really understand what it meant. I was already mum to 2 teenagers, I was doing ok. So these issues didn't worry me.

It didn't take me long to see first-hand the reality. Initially I saw extremely distressed child, heart breaking to see a child in such distress, even more heart breaking that she did everything in her power to keep me at arm's length, all I wanted to do was sooth her distress. I then saw this distress turn to frustration, the frustration turned to anger then the anger to aggression.

As I reflect I wonder, what were the changes in behaviour that led me to the change of description?

I realize the behaviour was the same it was me that perceived it differently probably due to my frustration and lack of understanding, but I realize now it was always distress. As the distress increased and she couldn't communicate verbally she communicated her distress her fear through her behaviour.

We need to be aware that the language we use to describe our children can influence our attitude and our intervention.

If we are faced with aggression how does that make us feel, the emotions that are stimulated influence our reaction. We take a step back, less able to connect, our emotions can make us reactive. Im the adult you're the child and you WILL do what you're told.

If we are faced with distress how does that make us feel, the emotions stimulated are completely different and again influence our reaction we are more open and willing to connect, to interact to ease the distress, to strengthen the relationship.

Thank you once again for reminding me why the language we use is so important, it influences our ability to connect to our children. Our children crave connection to help them heal. They just struggle to communicate this deep need they fear us leaving them so they push and push and push as in their wee minds we will leave them too.

I focus on strengthening the relationship which has proven to ease the distress. Yes we still have incidents, however what family doesn't

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