

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Matching Tone to Intent When Speaking*

**A**RE YOU AWARE OF THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE when you're trying to get a point across? Often people are surprised when they are accused of being angry or intense, not because of the words they are using, but the tonal quality of their voice. Mismatches between tone of voice and intended meaning cause a high percentage of everyday disagreements.

Children need to learn about voice modulation, but simply telling them they sound mean or disrespectful won't help them improve their voice awareness in the moment.

It can be fun to help children start noticing that we all have a variety of voices that we use according to the situation. It's helpful to role-play, trying out different voices and their effects.

When a child communicates with intensity, it often helps to ask, "Can you say that in a different voice?"

"Raise your words, not your voice.  
It is rain that grows flowers,  
not thunder."

~ Rumi

Some children have difficulty with volume, speaking so softly in a conflict that they can't be heard or so loudly that the other person feels overwhelmed. Educator Kara Dunn has published a book called *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* to help children with modulation. Number 1 on the scale is no voice and 5 is screaming.

We can help children learn to adjust their voices by demonstrating that we try to stay aware of our own tone. Stop and ask, "Did I sound angry? I'm sorry, let me lower my voice." It's important for adults to call attention to the positive feelings conveyed through children's voices. "Billy, your voice sounded so kind when you offered that toy to your friend."

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