

**Spoonful of sugar in Langford**



By Goldstream News Gazette  
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Langford's modern-day Mary Poppins says the secret to raising happy kids is to stop saying "no."

Sarah-Jane West started out as a British nanny more than 25 years ago tending to children with ties to the Royal Family.

Now she works as a nanny in Langford and is hosting two seminars next week to share her secrets.

"Toddlers are a particularly difficult age, they don't have the emotional stability," West said explaining the word "no" can damage a child emotionally and cause their self-esteem to spiral down.

She also insists saying "you" singles out the child and to say "we" instead.

For example, if a child is fiddling with an electrical socket, instead of saying "No! Don't do that," West would say, "We don't play with that. It's not a toy."

"Parents need to change their language and save (no) for emergencies," West said, explaining a sharp "no" could be used when a child runs in the road.

When West said "No" to a little girl she's nannying in Langford, "She stopped right in her tracks because I never say that word."

West began training to be a nanny in Britain in the late 1960s, and now bills herself as a "genuine Mary Poppins," after the classic 1964 film.

Instead of telling a child what not to do, West simply explains what they can do.

If a child is kicking a table, she will redirect them to kick a soccer ball.

"You are not stopping the child from doing what he's doing, you are changing what he's doing," West said.

The technique, which West has used for years, has its place says an expert in children's behaviour who works in Greater Victoria.

"I wouldn't say that saying 'no' is harmful, but I would advise to not have that as your main strategy," said Kim Ceurstemont, who holds a PhD in child clinical psychology.

Saying "no" and being overly negative isn't the best idea, she says. But children do need limits.

"Boundaries are extremely important," Ceurstemont explains. "But, being too negative can be destructive to the relationship between the parent and child."

A parent who has trouble saying "no" is simply a permissive parent, while choosing redirection is a good thing.

"Children have so many needs and we can't say no to them without knowing the needs before hand,"

Ceurstemont said.

One suggestion Ceurstemont makes is to ignore certain behaviours instead of saying "no."

She suggests ignoring irritating behaviour such as whining, but says to never ignore aggressive behaviour.

For parents who want to learn more about West's strategy, her seminars range in cost from \$35 per person per seminar to \$100 for a couple for both seminars.

How To Bring Up a Toddler Without Saying 'No,' seminars start at 7 p.m., June 25 and 26, at Tumblebums, 735 Goldstream Ave. To register call 250-474-7529.

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