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## Straight Talk...

by Maureen Collins

Maureen has a B Sc degree in Psychology from Edinburgh University. Maureen's passion is for showing people how to improve the quality of their conversations even under the most difficult conditions.

[www.straight-talk.co.za](http://www.straight-talk.co.za)

### Speak up – but plan first

You can learn a lot from your children – just as they learn from you. As adults we face conversations that we find difficult. Some have the potential to be disastrous for relationships, or career limiting at work.

So we hold our tongues and bite our lips, hoping the problems will resolve themselves or just go away. When they don't, our emotions inevitably get the better of us until one day we explode with anger and frustration.

Children behave differently. They haven't learned to be subtle with their feedback and are often quite brutal with each other. "I don't like you. You broke my toy." There's no holding back here and yet their relationships survive and you'll probably find the two friends still playing happily a few minutes later.

Holding back on what you feel and think can damage a

relationship just as much – and often more – than speaking out. When you are holding back, people around you know that something is wrong. They're just not sure what. When you answer the question "Are you OK?" with the infamous words, "Yes, I'm fine," you bring dishonesty into your relationship... and increase your stress level.

You can learn from your children by speaking up sooner and more honestly. You can teach your children, as they grow up, to spend a few moments planning what they are going to say in difficult or sensitive conversations so their openness and honesty does not do damage to themselves or to their relationships.

Some conversations are never easy, but if you speak up sooner, and think before you speak, you may be surprised how many difficult issues you can resolve without doing any damage at all.

