

## Relationship Translator

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On our recent visit to Rome, Michael and I were greatly assisted by the Google Translate App. It was so helpful when we were ordering tickets to the Vatican Museum, knowing which direction to the ride the Metro and figuring out the difference between cream or milk in the small market near our Airbnb.

I was thinking that we sometimes need such an app to help us in our communication with those we love. Of course, an app cannot convey emotion or communicate from the heart. But often, our words to our children and other family members don't relay the true intention of our heart even when spoken in our native tongue.

When was the last time that you said to your child, "Where were you? Do you know what time it is?" The intensity of your voice probably didn't communicate that you were so worried and didn't know what you would do if something happened to your child.

Or how about when you exclaimed with a furrowed brow several pitches higher than your normal voice, "What are you watching on your phone/tablet/ TV? Did you finish your homework yet?" The translation of this might be "You have so much potential. I want you to have a great future with unlimited possibilities and being responsible in school helps make a foundation for that."

Have you ever said, "Don't be so lazy; you have to work hard to amount to anything" when what you really meant was "I want you to be better than me, to have more opportunities than your father and I did. We want you to have an amazing life."

Although there is not yet an app that can translate our true heart, there are some steps that we can take to help us as parents. My friend and author, marriage/ relationship educator, Bento Leal III says in his new book "4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication" that we need to start with empathy as the essential relationship ingredient in communicating with others.

Mr. Leal says, "Empathy is a powerful state of mind, but it's not something we try to pound into ourselves, it's something we want to cultivate and let out -- it's our capacity to have compassion and concern for ourselves and others." His book gives practical tools on how to work on developing empathy and includes steps for a 12-Day Communication Challenge. Check out Mr. Leal's book here: [tinyurl.com/y3g58aqy](http://tinyurl.com/y3g58aqy)

Other things I suggest are:

- Write a gratitude list for all things that you appreciate about your child/ren
- Write a note or a letter to express some of these appreciation to your child/ren
- Make time to sit down and talk with your child. Make a date to spend time with him or her one-on-one. Do more listening than talking.
- Say "I am sorry." If you blow it, explain that you were too intense, what you really meant to say was....
- Practice modeling what you want your children to inherit by saying, "I am really upset right now. Let's talk about this later when we are both calmer."

*"If you want to get good at anything where real-life performance matters, you actually have to practice that skill in context. Study by itself is never enough." Josh Kaufman*