

PARENTING...what did I get myself into?

Is being a parent more difficult than you expected? Do you find yourself confused as to what to say or do next? Did you expect that being bigger, older and wiser that you would have control over the children? Then welcome to the club.

We parents now have the idea that our children should like us. Some parents have said to me "I want to be their best friend." Can't happen. Friends are usually about the same age. Children need leaders, decision makers in their lives. They need someone to make them feel safe, and a friend just can't do that. Parents and children become friends when the children are grown and responsible for themselves, not before.

Being a parent means you will have to make unpopular decisions. Children have an inborn sense of entitlement, i.e., I should have what I want when I want it. Any time you interfere with a child's sense of entitlement you will be unpopular with the child. They must learn this belief is false. Better to learn it from their caring parents than a much less caring world.

CONTROL....am I not supposed to have some?

Honestly, No. You do not have control over your child. They were born with free will, the ability to have control over themselves. One of the first big areas children show their self control is eating. You spoon it in, the brrrrrrpppp it back out. From there on it is downhill.

What you do have control over are consequences. "When you choose the behavior, you choose the consequence" should be our motto with the kids. You cannot stop a child from being openly, clearly, explicitly defiant to you. You can control what consequence you assign. You can let the defiance slide. You can give a short lecture. You can say "oh, I know you don't really mean that." You can ground them for the rest of their life. You can restrict privileges (TV, curfews, car keys...depending on the age). You have options. Some better than others.

The only way to raise a responsible child to adulthood, is to hold them responsible for their decisions. Blaming others won't do it.

COMMUNICATION...I talk, they don't listen

Practice listening to the kids. The younger the better. If you are on the phone tell them you will find them as soon as your off the phone. But find time to listen. If they learn to talk to you at a young age they will be more likely to talk with you as teens. If you yell, put down, shame, embarrass, they will shut down.

Phrases like:

- Tell me more about that...
- How did you feel when...?
- What were your thoughts....?
- Let me see if I am hearing you....(then summarize what they said, try to include any feelings of frustration, sadness, rejection, hurt,...they may have expressed

Go back to them later or the next day: "I appreciate your talking with me," "I enjoyed our discussion yesterday," "I was thinking about what you said the other day...." All are very powerful.

INDEPENDENCE....me do it

There are few people out there who love taking orders from others. We want to be our own boss, making our own decisions. Kids are no different. Our task as a parent is to help them grow up so they are respectful and responsible, so they don't need us. I had a mom say to me once "I am his boss until his 18th birthday, then he is in charge of himself." When does he get to practice decision making and experience the consequences of bad ones? I guess at 18.

Encourage them doing for themselves, what they are able to do. Praise them for their efforts even if they are not successful. Give choices: "Do you want eggs, cereal or breakfast bar?" rather than "what do you want for breakfast?" The first gives choices within the range of options you choose. The second gives limitless options, e.g., steak, candy, ice cream....all of which now lead to a "No, you can't have that." It is a set up for conflict which could have been avoided by offering a range of choices.

GOOD THINGS TO SAY TO KIDS:

1. "I am the parent in this house. I am in charge. You can disagree with me, but you cannot disobey me without there being consequences to pay."
2. "At times you will not like a decision I make. You may be angry with me. That is okay."
3. When they are upset, angry about a parent's leadership decision: "If I were your age I would be angry too." (Make sure the consequence still stands!)
4. "You have a choice to make. Choose wisely as the outcome is on you, not me."
5. "List off the choices you have in this situation and the possible outcomes."
6. "You are completely responsible for your behavior."
7. "You will discover happiness not by chasing after it, but in giving yourself to another."
8. "There are 2 kinds of people: those who are part of the problem and those who are part of the solution." Which do you want to be?
9. "Failure is not defeat unless you stop trying"
10. "The world is not fair. It should be, but it isn't. Actually, it is not written anywhere that it should be.

THE NATURE OF CHILDREN

1. Children are born with free will; they want to be independent and their own boss—always have, always will. The child *always* has the choice to obey or disobey.
2. Children are born selfish; they view everything by "what can it/they do for me" They are the center of *their* universe. They need to learn to be able to put others first. (Adults who did not learn this and are still the center of *their* universe are not fun to be around)
3. Despite their resisting rules and structure, kids feel safer when these exist.
4. Between age 2 and 3 is generally the age of transition. Parents need to move into the leader role and leave the servant role behind. The kids do not like this change and will resist it. It is tough to no longer be the "master," the one in charge," being waited on "hand and foot."
5. Resourcefulness is the ability to make something out of nothing and is required for kids to be able to entertain themselves. It is an *inborn* trait, which can be squashed by parents who constantly feel responsible to entertain their child or get them whatever they want, or can't say "No." Too many toys or non-creative toys can squash it, e.g., video games. Encourage books, drawing, clay,...

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PARENTS

1. a parent is an example; children copy behavior they see

2. a parent should be a leader
 - a. sometimes you will be unpopular
 - b. kids will not like the decisions you make
 - c. you will be called: "unfair," "you don't love me," guilt causers. DO NOT fall for this.
(You may regret decisions of the past: a divorce, staying with an abusive, alcoholic spouse too long, poor decisions resulting in trouble for you and the kids...these are all sources of guilt to have you be a pushover. Don't.)
3. parents are not in control of their child's decisions; they can only control consequences the decisions earn.
4. parents need to teach problem solving: "what are your choices here?" not "do it my way"
5. parents must assign* chores, without pay; chores teach responsibility. Chores should be within child's ability to perform safely. Allowances are to teach money management. (*Children can choose from a list)
6. parents must teach respect. This is best accomplished through teaching manners: "thank you," "please," and of course by example. You must be a leader to be respected.
7. Do not take your child's poor choice as a reflection on you.

MORE TRUTHS FOR PARENTS

- a. the world is NOT fair; learn it now or learn it later (Later is much harder)
- b. the *real* world will not cut them slack
- c. the world will expect responsible, respectful behavior, not whining
- d. reality will teach them the lessons you do not, and not as kindly
- e. the world does not care about their self esteem; they want the job done right without excuses or blaming others
- f. the world expects you to accomplish something first, then feel good. It will not praise every thing you do
- g. mistakes are lessons; the sooner you learn from a mistake the quicker you can move on
- h. trying is more important than succeeding
- i. tough teachers prepare you for tough bosses
- j. privileges are earned not an inborn right

TRUTHS ABOUT KIDS

1. children do much better if they are loved.
2. children are forgiving despite the mistakes we make.
3. children (and teens) want our approval; do not forget to *notice AND comment* on the **good** choices they make

4. of respect, responsibility and resourcefulness; only the last is inborn. The other two must be taught, preferably by parents.
5. family time is **very** important: family meals, family games, reading together (family meal time is quickly disappearing; family time is more important than sports, piano lessons, karate, dance,...)
6. children are curious and want to learn
7. children love doing things for themselves; they are proud of their accomplishments (when we do things for them they can do for themselves it undercuts their self confidence)

8. children need models more than they need critics (or, an ounce of example is worth a ton of advice, that is kids watch what we DO more than what we SAY)
9. children are not just little adults; do not expect more than they can produce (when children are small, being "mature for their age" may not be a compliment; it *may* mean they are missing their childhood)

there will be a lot of opportunities for parent-child battles; many do not need to be; pick your battles wisely. **safety is not negotiable.**

9 MISTAKES TO BE AVOIDED BY PARENTS

Mistake #1

It is a mistake to humiliate, embarrass, belittle as it destroys a child's self confidence

Mistake #2

It is a mistake for a child should to witness violence to their parent; it is as destructive as if it were happening to them. Children raised with violence learn that violence solves problems, when it only causes more problems, like quick tempers, sleep disturbance, depression, and more violence (like fighting at school).

Mistake #3

It is a mistake for parents to blame others, the school, a neighbor, a friend for a child's behavior as it will never help the child to be responsible (a responsible child who grows to a responsible adult is a universal desire of parents)

Mistake #4

It is a mistake for parents to excuse a child's poor choices as being the fault of someone else; this teaches the child they are not responsible for their own behavior (adults who make excuses are poor employees, friends and spouses)

Mistake #5

It is a mistake to think that undeserved praise and making your child feel "special" will ensure good self-esteem. The world will not see them as special until they DO something special. (Believing you are an extraordinary person is an inflated ego, not a healthy ego)

Mistake #6

It is a mistake for a parent to try to be a friend to their child. Children need parents to look up to, respect and believe they can keep them safe. If you are a friend, you are no

more capable, respectable than the kids at school. Parents need to be a leader when the kids are young; you can be friends when they are adults.

Mistake #7

It is a mistake to say “no” and then go on and on explaining why you did: if they don’t like the decision, they won’t like the reason behind it you may give them a reason, DO NOT argue your reason – that is where argumentative children are born you will NEVER convince them to see it your way. Trying is arguing. And as long as YOU argue there is hope “I[the child] will change YOUR mind.”

Mistake #8

It is a mistake for parents to believe that they are responsible for keeping their child entertained, that their boredom is your problem; many believe the more you buy for them, the more you let them have their way---the better parent you are. Actually it squashes their creativity.

Mistake #9

It is a mistake for parents to feel guilty saying “No.” Parents often do whatever they can to avoid having the kids angry at them. If you are to be a parent you must say “no” when you need to and be ready to handle their being angry with you.

BASIC GUIDELINES TO DISCIPLINE:

1. do not hit
2. do not embarrass, humiliate, ridicule
3. remove child from the center of attention; do not discipline in front of others
4. do not think you will convince the child to see it your way
5. do not get caught in power struggle, that is, don’t keep upping the consequence (threat) trying to overwhelm the child with your power and authority
6. toddlers need consequences carried out quickly; kids who can remember yesterday can wait until later
7. do not threaten something you will not enforce or causes you too much inconvenience; some inconvenience is to be expected
8. Act like a leader, not a friend. You can be friends when your child grows up.

TIME OUT: (discipline)

this can occur in the child’s bedroom or on a chair almost anywhere. Place needs to be safe and/or easily seen by the parent. Kitchen chairs work well. Place a chair in middle of room and away from everything. Use a kitchen timer (portable are best, can use microwave, stove,... timer). Child must sit until bell sounds. Start very short;(5-10 seconds for preschoolers) young kids have no sense of 1 minute vs. 10 minute. Any time is long when you are waiting for a bell to ring. 1 minute per year of age is a good *guideline*, not a rigid rule. Time can be longer as they grow older and are able to sit. If you have to struggle to keep child in chair, don’t. Use less time. May cry and complain while in the chair—do not have to be quiet, but ignore anything they say. Bedroom time out is simply their staying in the room until timer rings. If you have to fight, don’t.

THREE TICKETS: (discipline)

Place on refrigerator 3 tickets (construction paper, Popsicle sticks,... held up with a magnet) numbered 1-2-3. Child gets 3 tickets to start each day. For smaller children a simple reminder drawing of the 3-5 behaviors which are not okay can be placed above tickets as a reminder. With each offense a ticket disappears and some short chair time/timeout is served. All 3 tickets are gone, child goes to bed after dinner (or some other privilege is lost—the privilege lost must be important to them). Each day begins with 3 new tickets on the refrigerator.

STRATEGIC DELAY OF CONSEQUENCES : (John Rosemond)

Once a child has retentive memory, that is can recall events of yesterday, then they are able to retain memories and recall them at will. Consequences for a previous misbehavior can then occur without warning at a time convenient to you. (Warning a child at the time of a misdeed seems most fair, but it can start a power struggle. The child will often continue to disobey or begin to argue and cry as they want to “win.” Parent’s also want to “win” so they up the threat, often in severity and loudness. A power struggle actually brings parents down to the child’s level—more like a peer. A few well placed, unexpected consequences and child will begin to pay closer attention to parents.

AS A PARENT THINK TWICE ABOUT BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO: (or “you really do not want to do this”)

- Internet access on computer in child’s room, or other private area
- Child having phone in their room
- Child having TV in their room
- Unlimited time on video games

(Reasoning: these discourage family interaction and encourage isolation; the Internet demands supervision and video games make everything else in life seem “boring.”)

NATURAL & LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Definition: a natural result, outcome, of an action or behavior. Natural consequences occur without any enforcement on the part of the parent. Often, allowing the natural consequence to occur will prevent a parent/child argument and the child will learn the right lesson. Logical consequences involve action taken by the parent. No consequence should ever place a child at risk for injury.

Consequences are what influence most of what we do. Unpleasant outcomes usually keep us from repeating the same decision. (Get a speeding ticket, we slow down. Spill grape juice on living room carpet, we don't drink grape juice in LR. Yell at boss, get fired, you don't yell at the next boss.)

Consequences is what help us become responsible people. We do the right things because we don't like the outcomes if we don't. If we make bad choices and there are no bad outcomes we learn nothing and continue to make the bad choices. Say you make a bad choice; someone argues your innocence and blames someone else. You just learned to be irresponsible.

It is better to prevent problems than to try to deal with them after they have happened. When it comes to children, have pre-set consequences already in mind. This makes it easier to enforce when you need to do so. Despite the kids knowing what will happen if they misbehave, they WILL misbehave. It is human nature to resist someone telling us what to do. But there must be outcomes to poor choices. Consequences are not always punishment:

Examples of Natural Consequences:

- Child argues about wearing gloves in winter to play outside; provided frostbite is not an issue "the gloves will be here if you change your mind."
- Child argues there is no homework tonight; the next day they will have to face the teacher and peers.
- Child spends allowance foolishly; there is no money for the newly released video game.
- Child cheats in playing with friends; friends will start to stay away.
- Child is bossy with friends; friends will start to stay away.
- Child wants to put too much stuff in the backpack; they have to carry it.
- Child refuses raincoat or umbrella when raining; they will get wet.
- Bike gets left outside and is stolen (parents refusing to replace bike, child having to save money for replacement is a logical consequence as child is not demonstrating responsibility.)

[You could have chosen to turn each of the above into an argument, a power struggle, but allowing the natural consequences to happen taught the child the same lesson, probably even better!]

Examples of Logical Consequences

- "in control" temper tantrum(yelling and pounding on floor; no one is getting hurt)--leave area of tantrum, i.e., tantrum does not even get attention, which was the goal
- leaves toys all over—toys get a timeout

- misbehaves at dinner-- leaves the table
- do not give choices when there are none: "It is time for bed" not "it is time for bed, OK?"
- no dinner, no dessert (or late night snacks for that matter). It should be child's choice to eat or not eat. Child should eat *reasonable* dinner to get "treats."
- breaking curfew results in grounding
- annoying or gets into things while you are on the phone-- grounding to room/chair time
(anticipate, by planning activity for child while you are on the phone and avoid need for any consequences, everybody will be happier!)
- do not threaten consequences you cannot or will not enforce, e.g., "I will throw out your toys if you do not pick them up." Financially this is not a good idea and you are not likely to follow through with the threat. Even if you are, the message to the child is not very practical and is actually reckless.
- ride bike outside area permitted--bike gets grounded
- does not wear bike helmet--bike gets grounded
- stays out beyond curfew hours--curfew time becomes earlier
- stealing--1] pays victim out of own pocket; 2] returns item with apology
- lying--lowers trust, adult must "confirm" information child provides until child re-earns trust
- speaks with disrespect--do not respond, ignore the child's presence; "I will not speak with you unless you are respectful"(being angry is not disrespectful; name calling is disrespectful)
- destroys property --pays for it out of allowance, work, . . .
- sneaks out of house--grounding for reasonable period of time
- if clothes do not get to the hamper—they do not get washed. May have to wear soiled, wrinkled clothes to school as a result.
- "I will treat you as responsible as you behave." If kids behave properly than they earn the privilege of greater independence and freedom, i.e., less adult supervision. On the other hand if they act irresponsibly, than they should expect to be treated accordingly.

*****"In the eyes of the child, parents are "mean" when the child discovers that they MEAN what they say

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

Honesty means never having to look over your shoulder

Maturity:

- choosing good over evil
- focus becomes: making a contribution
- recognizing: there is a lot I need to learn
- being able to see things through the eyes of another

The harder you work the luckier you get

You did what you knew how to do—and when you knew better you did better.

Myra Angelou

Earn trust: be an open book, nothing to hide.

Knowledge is power

A person can negotiate, earn, persuade more than you can take by lying

Parenting: It is not about being pleasant in the short run—it is about being successful in the long run.

Over indulgence is the most insidious form of child abuse

The stronger you feel inside the less it matters what others say

Sometimes you make the right decision; sometimes you have to make the decision right.

When you choose the behavior you choose the consequence