

SERIES G: Topic 7

Empowering Your Kids

Children are empowered when they know:

- They are capable.
- They are loved.
- They are in charge of their lives.
- They have your support to go after their goals.
- They are trusted to responsibly use the resources you make available to them.
- Whether they succeed or fail, their reasonable efforts will be honored and appreciated.
- Neither their successes nor their failures will change their worth as a person in good standing in the family unless their misbehavior is willful.

> **Children make good judgments sooner when they have been allowed to "color outside the lines," and when they have been allowed to experience the consequences of their decisions.**

When you applaud their genuine efforts—even if those efforts fail—you encourage them to persist and to attempt more difficult undertakings. Parents who allow their children to take a wholesome path that is different or less efficient than their own are demonstrating faith in their children's ability to find their own way, which gives youngsters self-confidence.

Never pass up a chance to praise your children when their way turns out to be better than yours.

If there is a difference in opinions, ask your child to explain his views or share what's troubling him. Stay calm and discuss your position. Assure him you want to help, no matter what the problem is, and nothing he says will cause you to be outraged or turn on him. Go out of your way to approve as much of his thinking as possible.

Discipline

How much latitude you give your children is one of the hardest calls to make. No matter where you draw the line, they will think—and tell you—that you are being too controlling. In spite of their protests, children prefer clarity and strict rules over permissiveness or nagging. Stay kind, clear and firm. State your expectations and stick to them!

Be careful not to reward bad behavior by overreacting to it.

It is easy for well-meaning parents to allow their children to "push their buttons" and run all over them.

Set age-appropriate boundaries and consequences for your children. Take an active part in all their pursuits. Be involved in their lives so you can verify the wholesomeness of their friends and activities. Be aware that you could become their problem if you schedule too many activities for them, or if you need them to excel for you to be happy. Leading is better than pushing your children. Pushing turns to criticism quickly, so if you have to do it, do it cleverly and as infrequently as possible.

Thoughts on How to Parent

The relationship you have with your child has more power to change him than the correctness or logic of your arguments.

Inside every child who is misbehaving is one who would be doing something constructive if he knew what it was or how he could get involved.

The sooner you become a good parent the better because the media and your children's peers are gaining power over children at increasingly younger ages.

When you lose your relationship, you lose your power.

When anger, defiance and the silent treatment don't work, withholding your love seems like all there is left. Actually, withholding love is a very weak strategy. Acting distant from your child trains him to act distant from you. When you are distant, you lose more power. Look at how you got to where you are for ways to get you where you want to be.

When you withhold your love, your child is likely to seek it in the ways you fear most.

Rules of Thumb

Before and after every serious correction, reassure your child so he knows that the matter isn't enough to change your relationship.

- Be calm; having your emotional volume too high too often is useless, harmful and self-indulgent, and it shows a lack of parenting skills.
- You can be part of or maybe all of the problem.
- "They're doing what they're doing because you are doing what you are doing," according to Dr. Phil.

- Since you are the only one you can change, change others by fixing yourself.
- Being involved and proactive in your children's lives is essential. To paraphrase President Ronald Reagan, no matter how much you trust them, it is essential to verify.
- Adults at a rehab facility recovering from addictions were asked how they got hooked. The most common answer was "My peers, and lack of parental knowledge and oversight when I was young. I was too far gone before they were aware of my condition." The answer was the same, whether these people thought they came from good homes or bad homes.
- Children should not be able to make their own rules until they are paying all their own bills.
- Misbehavior is a breach of your relationship.
- When your child's peers have more power over him than your closeness does, their vices have more power over him than your virtues do.
- Some children misbehave to get the love or attention they crave.



ASK YOURSELF

How can I get my child interested in activities that are more wholesome and appealing to him than misbehaving with his peers?