

Parenting Struggles 101

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Most parents struggle when it comes to handling difficult encounters with their kids. There are three major reasons for this:

- 1) Our expectations may be developmentally inappropriate
- 2) Keeping ourselves calm while our kids are losing it (especially in public) is challenging
- 3) If we do not have an over-riding parenting philosophy to guide our response it is difficult to handle the day to day challenges with our kids consistently

Developmental Appropriateness

Changing children's behavior sometimes begins by changing parents' expectations of their children. Trying to teach young children appropriate behavior is actually closer to training than it is to teaching "little adults." This means choosing a method and repeating it consistently until the "trainee" achieves mastery. Very little of the training involves extensive verbal explanations. While some verbal explanation is necessary, it must be kept short. Most important, the trainer must remain calm, patient and gentle, but also persistent and firm.

Keeping Calm

Ironically, if you have a child who is doing something you don't like, get really upset about it on a regular basis guarantees they will repeat the behavior! Too much emotional upset on the part of a parent is problematic for several reasons. First, children learn to regulate their big, messy, emotions **WITH** their parent's support rather than alone. Taking the time to comfort our children and organize their feelings begins to build this capacity to self-regulate in them. When we lose our cool, our children may "comply" but they will learn another lesson we likely did not mean to teach – feelings are not allowed. Over time, children who are not supported with their feelings start to show secondary problems (i.e., anxiety, more intense temper tantrums, etc.). Second, parents who over explain and give three, four or five reasons to a child to encourage right behavior are almost saying "You really don't have to behave unless I can give a number of good arguments as to why you should." This is not discipline, it is begging, and the shrewd-enough child will simply take issue with the parent's reasons. While this parent may start out calm, they often end up feeling exasperated.

Consistency

Consistency is one of the biggest things parents struggle with today. In this age of access to unlimited information and expectations of instant results, it is difficult for parents not to "jump ship" and try the "latest thing" which promises to cure their particular struggle with their child. Part of the reason for this is that most parents do not have a consistent parenting philosophy to guide their approach to difficult encounters with their children. This leaves them thinking through each situation as if it is brand new. Parents are busy people and this takes an enormous amount of time and energy. A parenting philosophy will provide a consistent overarching context within which parents can make decisions about issues with their kids as they come up.

Children need consistent repetition of developmentally appropriate behaviour in a warm and loving environment. Eckert Centre's Warm-Firm parenting method promotes the following behaviour in children:

- Strong decision making skills

- Growing presence of self-control
- Responsibility taking for choices made
- An attitude of deep caring for others

If this is your parenting goal, come learn more about the Warm-Firm parenting method at our ***Raising a Confident Child*** Seminar December 6 and 13, 2010. Visit www.beaparentingpro.com or call 403 230-2959 for more information.