

BOOK REVIEW: *Parenting With Love and Logic* – Part I

As a parent I was well versed in the areas of positive phrasing and tried hard to omit words such as “NO!” “Can’t”, “Won’t” and other negative words when disciplining our children. I read all about natural and logical consequences, and memorized excerpts of The Strong Willed Child. I got to be pretty good at giving the girls choices and setting up the consequences, but I crumbled as soon as my strong willed child resisted my attempts to enforce the agreed upon consequences. I spent many sleepless nights questioning how a child that I loved more than life itself could make me feel so powerless, inadequate, and frustrated! (I suspect that she also spent many nights devising new and unique ways to try.)

As I have researched and explored resources that could be helpful for our students and their families, I have come across some wonderful resources that sure would have been useful when I was parenting our two daughters. Among my favorite resources is the book Parenting With Love and Logic by Jim Fay (a parent and elementary school principal) and Dr. Foster Cline (a child psychologist). In an attempt to share with you what I have learned that I wish I had known then, here are a few ‘pearls of wisdom’:

Love and logic parenting has two basic rules:

Rule # 1 = Adults set firm limits in loving ways without anger, lecture, or threats.

Rule # 2 = When a child causes a problem, the adult holds the child accountable for solving his/her problems in a way that does not make a problem for others.

*When your child has created a problem through misbehavior or mistake, help him/her learn the consequences from the mistake by empathizing, brainstorming possible solutions to the problem, and discussing possible consequences of repeating the mistake. Give

your child permission to solve it or not solve it. For example, your child comes home with a poor report card. After having the discussion about what the child can do to improve the grades, let your child know that you will love them no matter how long it takes them to get through elementary school (or whatever grade they are currently in) and that you are always available to assist if needed.

*Use natural consequences whenever possible.

*Impose consequences that allow you to take care of yourself. “Effective consequences that parents impose make the child think about their actions and make the parent feel better.” The consequences often include isolation or having the child perform extra chores around the house to “pay the parents back”. For example, if the child is late and misses the school bus and you have to drive him/her to be on time. (Yes, I know this takes an incredible amount of self-control to save the lecture and lesson for later.) After school when your child wants you to do something try saying: “I’m sorry, but since I had to drive you to school this morning, my energy is drained”. Take this opportunity to suggest that energy could be replaced by doing some extra chore around the house that you were planning to do after school. After a few times of letting the consequences do the teaching, even the strong willed child will get the message!

*Don’t remind about what needs to be done, or the consequences of non-compliance or of not completing the requirement. Reminders communicate the underlying message that you are afraid they are not capable. Adopting a posture of no reminders conveys a strong underlying message that translates into “I’m sure you’ll remember on your own, but if you don’t you will surely learn something from the experience.” Parents who feel the need to be “The Reminder” raise children who develop the attitude Jim

Fay calls the “No Sense in Both of Us Worrying about it” syndrome.

Remember that when you have to enforce a consequence, always do it with empathy. For example, when your child doesn't do the class work correctly at school and has to bring it home as homework, you could say something like, “I'm sorry that it worked out the way it did. I'm sure it's no fun having to do the work over again.” or, “I'm so sorry that you won't get to go to the ballgame tonight. I know how much you were looking forward to going.” (You may have to practice saying this without sounding sarcastic. Sarcasm would be more hurtful than helpful.)

*It is OK to say ‘NO’ to your kids and mean it. When you say ‘no’ and your kids ask ‘Why’, don't expect your kids to thank you and understand your reasoning. If they don't like your decision, they surely won't like the reasons! Children need to test the limits to make sure they are firm. When limits are firm, children learn to creatively move within the established limits. When limits are not firm, children spend their energy testing the limits.

Most parents are pleasantly surprised to learn how easy and effective it is to enforce consequence with understanding. Consistency and perseverance on your part pay off in the long run, but in the short run, strong willed children are often slow learners when it comes to learning how to take responsibility for actions. Consider it a one-year plan to learn in a safe, caring, environment for lifetime results.

Have a wonderful week.
Mary Warren

P.S. Just in case you're wondering, our girls are both happy, well adjusted young women. They assure me that it's not necessarily because of our good parenting, but in spite of our parenting! Now

that our strong willed one is the parent of an even stronger willed daughter, I'm ecstatic!

Resources:

Parenting With Love and Logic by Jim Fay and Foster Cline

The Pearls of Love and Logic for Parents and Teachers by Jim Fay

Counselor Corner Article: Eagle Eye February 19, 2008