



Refuse to label your child as 'bad' and don't see anything he does as a personal insult. He will soon discover, and learn to believe, that he is a good person as he learns to see himself through your eyes.

Week 2: Ask for consideration instead of hurling an insult.

Practise for a week to tell your child how you feel and what you need, instead of putting him down.

Say: "I don't like it when the house is a mess. I need you to help me pick up the toys." Instead of: "I can't believe the mess you've made! You're such a slob!"

Say: "This is my favourite CD and it makes me happy to listen to it. I need you to go and play outside if you're going to continue being noisy." Instead of: "Get out or shut up!"

Week 3: Put his feelings into words.

Practise for a week to put your child's feelings into words.

Say: "You are sad because your toy broke." / "You are angry because I won't let you go outside to play." / "You're excited about going to the beach and it's difficult for you to wait."

When needed, explain what you expect.

"You are sad because your toy broke, but you know it isn't right to take your brother's toy."

"You're excited about going to the beach and it's difficult for you wait, but you need to help me to get everything ready before we can go."

Hearing you put his feelings into words over and over again in various situations lets your child know that you understand him. As a result, he will feel less frustrated when you set boundaries and he will find it easier to deal with his emotions.

Week 4: Talk about what to do, instead of what not to do.

Practise for a week to put requests in a positive way, so that your child knows exactly how to stay within the boundaries.

Say: "You need to walk while we're in the shop."
Instead of: "Don't run in the shop!"

Say: "Look with your eyes, not with your hands."
Instead of: "Don't touch!"

Say: "Pet the cat like this."
Instead of: "Don't hurt the cat!"

Week 5: Express confidence in your child.

Practise for a week to build your child's feelings of self-worth by telling him that you believe in his ability.

Say: "I know you can do this." "I'm so proud of you for doing what I tell you to."

Week 6: Avoid trying to use guilt as a tool.

No happy and successful man has ever stood in front of an audience with the words: "I want to thank my mother for making me feel guilty most of the time. I wouldn't be the man I am today without those feelings."

Many parents doubt their own ability to set boundaries and to discipline their children appropriately. So they resort to using guilt as a tool. They don't allow themselves to relax or to be happy when they are around their children, because they are afraid of being caught off guard. Instead, they act like frustrated martyrs, in an attempt to evoke sympathy from their children and blackmail them into being 'good'.

It takes courage to be happy and enjoy life. Practise for a week to relax and enjoy your children while they're within the boundaries. When they overstep the boundaries, deal with it as quickly as possible - without laying a guilt trip on them. Then resume where you left off.

Soon, being happy will become your default state of mind!

Criticize Constructively

Practica Program Parents' Article, November 2009
By Lizette van Huyssteen

Children discover who they are and how they fit into the world by looking at themselves through their parents' eyes. So, how you point out mistakes to your child can shape his personality in the long run.

Parents, who habitually humiliate and frustrate their children, and cause them to feel guilty and incompetent most of the time, unknowingly shape their children's personalities in a very negative direction. On the other hand, when a child doesn't receive any directions or feedback from a parent, and there are no boundaries in his world, he learns that what he does and who he is, is not important.

The negative cycle:

Even toddlers and young children feel angry and frustrated when they get the idea that their parents don't respect their thoughts and feelings. Some children withdraw into themselves, but most react by being stubborn and rebellious when feeling unfairly treated and overpowered.

It's only natural that most parents respond to their children's stubbornness with even harsher criticism and that many families get caught up in a cycle of push-pull between children and parents that is not easy to live with.

If you feel frustrated by the fact that the slightest bit of misunderstanding in your household generally quickly evolves into a full-blown power-struggle, you will most likely benefit greatly by putting yourself on a 6 week 'parent training course' as laid out below.

Week 1: Don't be surprised when your child acts like a child.

Even the sweetest child will repeat just about every bad behaviour at least a few times before he eventually learns, from the negative responses that he gets from the key persons in his life, that certain behaviours are to be avoided.

You'll do your child an enormous favour if you accept that it is natural for a young child to experiment with various behaviours, both good and bad.

Practise for a week to stay calm when your child does something 'bad' and do not give in to your emotions. In fact, try to establish why you feel emotional in the first place. Is it not normal for a 3-year old to act like a typical 3-year old?

Instead of getting upset, or ignoring your child's bad behaviour to the point where you explode in a fit of rage, rather act quickly and decisively when he does something that is unacceptable. Discipline him as if his offence, as well as your reaction to it, is perfectly normal and within your ability to handle.

Then go on with life with the firm belief that he is a sweet and good little person who just needs a little nudge in the right direction every now and then.