

Greetings!

Last month we clarified the difference between discipline and punishment. This month we are going to examine what Becky Bailey (author of "Easy To Love, Difficult to Discipline") refers to as the "heart of discipline", assertiveness. Assertive parenting allows parents to clearly define limits for children in a manner that leaves both the child's and parent's dignities in tact.

In the first three sections below we will examine three key areas of assertive discipline.

In the final section see how you can invite me in to speak to your school, church or community group on this and other parenting subjects for free.

Clear expectations



on."

When stating a command in an assertive manner it is important that parents keep it short, simple and use a calm, matter-of-fact voice. It is common for parents to talk too much when stating what they need to have done. Instead of "Please put your boots and coat on, we will be late, mommy can't be late for work. Hurry up, get those boots on." Try using three or less words, in a calm, matter of fact voice. "Boots on now." This sentence is much easier for a child to process and it is more likely that they will comply. Then give the next command. "Coat

The other approach I recommend to parents to make expectations clear is to use "I expect....." statements. Use these statements to pro-actively lay down in a short, simple manner exactly what you expect from the child. Once again using a calm, matter-of-fact voice state "I expect you to clear your plate off when you are done eating." This sets the child up for success and lowers your stress level. Children need to have consistent expectations laid out for them, so be patient with having to state the same expectation for a number of times before the child internalizes the expectation and is independent in completing it.

Beware of unknowingly giving choices

Assertive parenting means being aware of how you phrase a command. Frequently parents will use words such as "let's", "please" and "OK" which all insinuate that the child has a choice in following the direction or not.

It is good to teach manners, but save that for times when the child has a choice. When parents need something done or a rule followed manners can make the situation worse. "Please clean up your room." offers the child the choice of whether to comply or not. "I expect you to clean up your room now." does not offer such a choice, but rather clearly states what you expect done.

Another hard habit for parents to break that is counter to assertive parenting is saying "OK" at the end of a command. It is as if you are asking your child's

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permission to have your expectation fulfilled. "Clean up the toys now, OK?" This very much puts the child in the drivers seat because if it is not OK with them, they feel free to not comply. This sets up the stage for power struggles which could be avoided by assertive statements like, "clean up the toys now."

Be specific in your expectations



The more specific parents are in pro-actively laying down expectations on their children the more likely they will get the results they are seeking. "Be responsible" does not give the child enough information, what is the definition of responsible? "I expect you to do homework first" lays out more specifically what "responsible" means. Once again it is important that parents keep it as short and to the point as possible. Lecturing is meaningless in

assertive parenting. The children are not able to process all that information and the parent's impact on the child's behavior is lost.

I am available to come talk to your school, church or community group about this or any other parenting subject. I have a nice general presentation "Love and Limits: Raising Happy and Cooperative Children" that has been well received by many area groups. It is an hour in length and usually free depending on the distance I need to travel. If you would like to book a presentation for your group please contact me at 920-619-6539 or by email at ruthfett@parentteamgb.com.

Be well

Sincerely,

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