



Enriching the Parent

February 2007

Teaching Self-Control by Vicky Mlyniec www.parents.com

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An Affiliate of

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Avery Partnership for Children

Mitchell-Yancey Partnership for Children

When six-year-old Elizabeth Juleson gets mad, she'll often slam a door—or even hit her mom. "It was worse when she was 5, so we're making progress," says her mother, Mary, of Norwalk, Connecticut. "She now understands consequences better and cares more about what other people think. Unfortunately for me, though, that's helped her control her impulses at school more than it has at home."

Now that your big kid is learning all sorts of new skills, you probably assume that her self-control will improve too. So it's disappointing to still see meltdowns, foot-stomping, tantrums, and act-now-think-later behavior. Believe it or not, your child is learning how to make choices about her conduct rather than just acting on impulse. But it's a slow process.

Being in school motivates kids to behave because they're eager to avoid embarrassment. "Kids who develop self-control tend to have better relationships with their peers and can

handle frustration, anger, and disappointment more easily," says Kathy Reschke, Ph.D., assistant professor of human development and family science at Ohio State University, in Columbus. However, elementary school also means more rules, greater academic demands, and long periods of sitting still. That's why your child may "let it all out" the minute he gets home. "Boys, who often need more physical activity than girls, can have an especially hard time keeping it together during the school day," says *Parents* adviser Michael Thompson, Ph.D., author of *The Pressured Child*. Fortunately, there are strategies that can help children become less impulsive.

Be Realistic

"Self-control is a complex skill," Dr. Reschke says. "It requires being able to calm down, suppress a strong urge, and behave appropriately. That's hard for (con't on page 2)

Martin Luther King Jr. and Nonviolent Families

A meaningful way that we and our children can celebrate the birthday of the great civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is to incorporate his legacy of nonviolence into our daily lives. Each time we renew our commitment to resolving conflicts nonviolently, we honor Dr. King's legacy.

Dr. King quickly realized that the best strategy to liberate black people and gain them the right to vote was to use nonviolent forms of protest. His home base was in Alabama, where he first led the 1956 Montgomery bus boycott because they forced black people to sit in the back of the bus. He

knew that any violence on the part of his civil rights workers would lead to violent counterattacks from segregationists; leading to injury and death for his followers. He sponsored workshops to train workers in nonviolent behavior. Dr. King's nonviolence strategy was successful. In this way, Dr. King won many allies and gained passage of the civil rights bills of 1964 and 1965.

His workers felt proud that they could contain their violence and learn not to hate their enemies. This galvanized the sense of mission of the workers. (con't on page 2)

Upcoming Events

**Check out page 2 for
Information on:**

**Support Groups in
Watauga, Wilkes &
Ashe**

Love and Logic classes

Dine and Discover

Group Opportunities for Information & Support

SUPPORT GROUPS

Watauga: Challenging Behaviors

Watauga: Medically Fragile Children

First Friday at 6pm/Dinner and Childcare provided

Information/register: 828-262-6089

Wilkes & Ashe: Groups are beginning!

For information call & leave message for Norma at (866)812-3122

LOVE AND LOGIC PARENTING CLASSES

are offered in Avery, Ashe, and Watauga. For more information on the times and places of these classes call: 828-262-6089

DINE & DISCOVER

For Watauga Women

Relax and Take a Breath

Earn \$10 cash or \$10 gift card for attending!

March 15 6-8pm St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church

Dinner at 6pm Group at 6:30pm Childcare provided

Information/register: 828-264-1532



MLK, Jr. and Non-Violent Families

(con't from pg. 1)

Young people today can learn from King that nonviolent protest and participation in the democratic process are the best means of bringing about change. From King's teachings, many of us realize that nonviolence is the best approach to resolving conflict. Dr. King understood better than most people that violence only begets more violence.

To honor this legacy of nonviolence today in our lives:

We can help our children avoid violence by acknowledging their anger even while we set limits. Help them learn constructive ways of dealing with strong emotions. Phrases like "I know you're angry, but you can't hit or hurt someone," are helpful.

(con't on pg. 3)

Teaching Self-Control (con't from page 1)

many adults." Kids need plenty of practice and small successes—so don't have unreasonable expectations. If you have to wait at the doctor's office for a half hour, don't assume your child can sit quietly without griping or annoying her sibling. Bring a puzzle book or a game she can play with while she waits.

Define Self-Control

"You need to explain and demonstrate the concept—otherwise it's too abstract," says Jon Oliver, author of *Lesson One: The ABCs of Life*, whose company, Lesson One, teaches life skills to students. He tells kids, "If you're in a car that's skidding on ice, it feels scary, just like it does when you're out of control." Oliver has found that this exercise is surprisingly effective: Blow bubbles around your child, and ask him to use his self-control not to pop them. You can also help him "picture" restraint by telling him to imagine a stop sign or a red light, which he can visualize

whenever he needs to stop and think before he acts.



Share The Effort

Verbalize your thoughts so your child sees how you overcome an impulse ("I really wanted that watch, but we're saving for vacation so I made myself walk out of the store"). Pick an area in which you need to improve your self-control, and have him choose one too. Yours might be cutting down on coffee; his might be not interrupting. Check in with each other occasionally to see how you're doing.

Brainstorm Options

If your child had a meltdown when the other kids wouldn't play the game she wanted, ask her what else she could do or say to herself the

next time. If she only comes up with one ("Not cry"), keep prompting her. When she runs out of ideas, you can say, "Could you try suggesting taking turns?" The point isn't to give the "right" answer but to help her practice generating strategies, Dr. Reschke says.

Coach In The Moment

If you hear your child threatening to get even with his brother for breaking his toy, for instance, ask him, "What might happen if you do that?" This helps him see how acting on an urge that seems irresistible now can later cause consequences (tears, time-outs, two broken toys) he won't like. Stand close by, make eye contact, and put your hand on him. "You'll give him the sense that he's in touch with someone who's in control and let him 'borrow' some of yours," Dr. Thompson says. Tell him you believe he can tell himself no—and when he does, say, "That took strength."

(con't on p. 3)

Parent to Parent FSN-HC Presents: Pearls of Love and Logic

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids ©Love and Logic Press, Inc. www.loveandlogic.com 1-800-338-4065

Empathy Overpowers Anger

Parents who are strong enough to let youngsters experience the consequences of their actions also need to help them feel loved. Too often parents or teachers mete out consequences with anger. Missing empathy, the child feels no love and blames others for his/her own mistakes.

A parent recently told a nationally known educator and expert on child discipline that she needed help managing the art of empathy. Here is her story.

I keep getting mad when I give consequences. I get mad at my daughter, and then she gets mad at me.

I almost got to empathy last week. I was so close. My daughters didn't study her spelling words. I kept hearing your voice during your last lecture when you said, "These can be great opportunities. Don't blow them by nagging." So I didn't nag. I also heard your voice saying, "The school will provide the consequences. You can balance them out with an equal amount of empathy."

She came home with a "D" on her test, and I did a great job of being sorry for her. I said, "Wow! It must really be embarrassing to get a "D". She got real quiet, thinking hard about what she had done. It was great!

Then I heard your voice in my head saying, "When you run out of things to say transfer the problem to the youngster by asking a question." I said, "Wow! What are you going to do?" With the saddest little face, she said, "I don't know what I'm going to do."

I had her owning her own problem and thinking hard. And then...I just had to do it. I don't know why, but I just blurted out, "And you're not going to that party on Friday!"

That did it! She started yelling, "What do you mean I'm not going to the party! It's not my fault I got a "D". You should see the words that the teacher gives! She never gives us any time to study and...it's just not fair."

Isn't it amazing? It only took one remark for me to change my daughter from a thinker to a fighter. So I'm back to work on empathy.

The educator, Jim Fay, of the Cline/Fay Institute in Golden, Colorado, told me recently that he hasn't seen this woman at his lectures for several months. He said he hopes she has mastered the art of giving equal amounts of consequences and empathy.

It helps to remember that using anger, threats, and lectures rarely work with children. Parents need to combine consequences with empathy. Those who deliver consequences in loving, but firm tones find this far from easy but it works.

For more information on classes:
(828)262-6089 or (866)812-3122



*Empathy opens the mind
for learning*

Teaching Self-Control (con't from

Evaluate What Happened

Whether your child's choice was a good one or a bad one, walking her through the experience and discussing the result will help her remember it when a similar situation occurs. For example, you might say, "Are you glad you ate all the cookies?" It's more effective to talk about what she can do next time than to punish her for losing control, but wait until her emotions have cooled.

MLK, Jr. and Non-Violent Families (con't from pg. 2)

Children learn methods of resolving differences from us, and how we manage conflict within our family. Counting to ten, taking a deep breath, or finding other ways to calm down will help us manage the intense anger that can lead to physical violence. After we calm down, we can listen to our child's or partner's point of view, respect their opinions (even if we disagree), and search together for solutions to the conflict. In doing so, we model basic skills for resolving conflict.

We can support conflict resolution and violence prevention programs in our schools and communities. Find out what programs about conflict resolution are available through your child's school, or within your religious community. If none exist, contact organizations such as Educators for Social Responsibility that create curriculum materials promoting peaceful resolution to conflict. For more info: www.familyeducation.com

Help us save money!! If you have an email address that we can use for this newsletter, please email to hayeskl@appstate.edu or call (828) 262-6089. This newsletter is also available on-line at www.parent2parenthighcountry.org.