



Supporting the Parent

Information and Support for Families of Children with Special Needs in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, & Yancey Counties

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



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Smart Start

Upcoming Events

**Support Groups in
Watauga, Wilkes &
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Love and Logic classes

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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

Giving Control without Giving it Away

We often hear how wise it is to give our children a certain amount of freedom and control over their lives. However, children who have more control than they know how to handle often act out in unbelievable ways to show us that they need limits. It's almost as if they are saying, "How bad do I have to act before you will control me?" This confuses parent and child alike. The child, having become addicted to power, demands more power while at the same time asking for parental control.

Children who start out with too much power force us to tighten the limits, and that makes them angry. Who wouldn't be mad? When control is taken away, children feel they are being robbed of something that is rightfully theirs.

Dr. Sylvia B. Rimm, psychologist, educator, and author, explains that we all compare the amount of control we have in a relationship to the control we used to have, not to how much we think we should have.

Dr. Rimm says loving parents use what she calls the "V" of love. The sides of the "V" stand for firm limits within which the child may make decisions and live with the consequences. The bottom point of the "V" represents birth, while the open top of the "V" represents the time when the child will leave home. Toddlers decide about such things as chocolate or white milk. Ten-year-olds are deciding how to spend their allowances and the seventeen-year-olds make decisions about almost all

aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, the "V" is turned upside down in families where the child is treated almost like a miniature adult right from birth. These youngsters become tyrants. We've all seen them hold their parents hostage to temper tantrums and pouting.

Children need the opportunity to make choices, but these choices should be within firm limits appropriate for their age. This is easier said than done. However, it helps to keep the "V" in mind, always leaving bigger decisions for the next year. Make sure there is more control available to the child this year than last.

Teachers are good resources regarding age-appropriate decisions for children. And remember, some of the greatest experts on parenting may be in your carpool or community. However, it is wiser to get advice from parents who have well-adjusted children than those whose youngsters are driving them crazy.



*Make Sure There Is More
Control Available To Your
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Teaching Self-Control (con't from p.1)

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."

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.

St. Patrick's Day Scavenger Hunt

www.familyfun.com

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Paper
- Marker
- Black pot
- Chocolate Gold coins
- Scissors
- Green construction paper

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Hide a pot filled with gold chocolate coins either inside or out, depending on the weather.
2. Cut out several four leaf clovers from green construction paper. Cut one clover larger than the others.
3. Write clues leading up to the pot on the smaller clovers.
4. On the large clover, write the first clue and place it under your child's breakfast dish.

