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)
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

Dine and Discover:
For Watauga Women
Banking Skills and Pay the Bills
Earn $10 cash or $10 gift card for attending!
February 15 6-8pm St. Elizabeth’s Catholic Church
Dinner at 6pm Group at 6:30pm
Childcare provided
Information/register: 828-264-1532

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

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.

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.

(co’t on pg. 3)
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 know 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.”

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

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