



Hibiscus Coast Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren Inc.

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Raising Tricky, Challenging Children

Presented by John Cowan, Parents Centre

This is a summary of the presentation he gave at Orewa College. Phrases in bold are quotes from John.

Introduction: Relax and enjoy your children were John's opening comments. Children are learning impulse control; problem solving and how to get their needs met in an appropriate way. Problems can be seen as opportunities, and discipline as how we can help our children to make a better decision after doing something stupid. Try not to do this while you are angry as this may take the form of revenge.

Reactive behaviour: don't under estimate the atmosphere in your home. Do they feel loved, safe and is it a fun place to be? They should never doubt that they are loved even when you are angry or disappointed in their behaviour. Having a bit of fun can reset the atmosphere in your home if things are tense – a picnic, game, trip to the park etc.

"A child who feels right acts right"

Monitor the tone of voice you use, even during discipline. Would you like an adult to talk to you with that tone? An angry voice never seems to deliver the results you want. Try to keep a calm quiet voice. If you are finding something is just annoying, stop and think before you talk. John suggested **"only run for fire and haemorrhages"** other situations you can take a bit of time to think how you are going to address them. While you think and calm down he suggested saying **"kids go down to your room you'll be safer there."**

Focused attention: this is a good way to reset negative labels that children have of themselves and focus on the great things that they are doing or have achieved. Try to give each child 20minutes focused one on one attention each week. Comment on the positive behaviour that you see e.g. Thank you for including your brother; great you got your bag ready for school; thanks for getting in the car on time; thanks for putting your towel in the

bathroom; great that you hung up your coat. The more you reward it through praise and attention the more you will see of it. **“Praise is the fastest route to change”**

Full emotional tank: if you feel good, you generally make good decisions (kind words, touch etc.). If your emotional tank is empty, you tend to feel bad and make poor decisions (loss of friends, in trouble etc.). Generally, after school children will have a low tank, spend time with them when they get home talk with them about their day, have something to eat together. Positive touch is really important, especially with boys. It is found that as boys get older they are touched considerably less than girls by their parents/caregivers. If they don't like hugs, tussle their hair; sit close on the couch when watching tv; touch shoulders when standing next to each other. A way to gauge your child's self-esteem is to look at their friends, this is the way they see themselves. Listening each night to your child about their day helps to develop trust.

Peer pressure: when you say “no” this can help against peer pressure. The child can blame you for not wanting to do something that their friends are doing by saying “my parents would kill me if I did that” this can give them a way out of a situation. Make you home teenage friendly. If their friends like and respect you they will look out for your child. Get to know your child's, friend's, parents. You can be eyes ears for each other when your children are at their house and let you know if there are any concerns.

Try new ideas, don't get stuck on the one idea.

Don't argue with an angry, stropky child. Talk later when things have calmed down – be strategic. Maybe at bedtime approach the topic “that wasn't so good today.....” Avoid “why” questions, they never get a good response. Some children enjoy the confrontation. **“Time to deal with a problem is when it is not a problem”**

“Do what you want to do, after what you've got to do” in other words “yes you can watch tv, after we've finished your homework “or “play times over but we'll ring your friend to come over tomorrow.”

It is good for your child to hang out with a variety of ages. It allows them to reinvent themselves. It gives them the opportunity to be looked up to and to have others to look up to.

Angry children: let them know that you will talk with them when they have a pleasant tone, give them time to cool down. Keep an eye on what they are watching. When a child is in trouble don't assume anything. Ask questions first and listen to their side of the story before you do anything. You could try “calm down Mary, you can handle this.....” Try and distract them from the angry mood by jumping on the tramp, shooting hoops, washing their hands, it is supposed to be very calming. There is the anger ladder which shows the stages children progress through anger. It is in the toolbox handbook but I have also attached it.

“Behaviour is unacceptable, the child is always acceptable”

There will be a consequence but the relationship between you and your child will always be there and you still love them. You love the child but dislike the behaviour.

Keeping persevering while you are trying to change behaviour – it will take time.