

Off Topic – Child Discipline

(This thread was just too good not to include!)

OK folks, you are the smartest collection of people I have access to... so I need some advice/experience here. I will try to be brief. I have three kids, two boys (ages 8 and 10), and a girl who is almost two. My boys are like night and day, could not be more different personality wise. My oldest is a perfectionist and a real people pleaser, he is very bothered if he thinks either me or my husband is upset or disappointed in him, and he (generally) does what we ask the first time we ask it. There are times of course that he acts up but if my voice is even barely raised he is bothered by that.

My middle child is extremely creative and imaginative. He is a great kid, but he likes to do things on his own time, which leads to daily battles when getting ready for school, etc. I do not like to yell, I hate hearing myself yell. And yet, I feel like all I am doing is yelling. He could not care less that I am upset or yelling at him. I'm sure I look like a lunatic when I get frustrated, he has even laughed at me a couple of times which of course made me more upset at him. I need a different approach with him. I know yelling is not the answer but it is my automatic response, and I'm working on it. I feel horrible after wards, plus, it's not working or motivating him to do what I ask. My question is, what approaches have you all tried with such a child and what has worked? Do I give a warning and list the consequence (i.e., no Ipod for a day or whatever) and then if he doesn't listen implement consequence? What other approaches have you tried? I'm frustrated, I hate hearing myself nag and badger him. Just looking for advice, and what others have had success with. Thanks in advance.

I love your response, Elizabeth!!

I often think that "difficult" kids have the same qualities that makes awesome grown-ups, their traits that make them tough to raise are the same things that lead to strong adults.

<http://www.aharenting.com/>

I don't want to argue about child-raising, it is too exhausting and I am too busy for that. I just do want to say I don't agree with fake "consequences", 1-2-3 was totally not magical in my house, and yet my house does have rules that we keep in line with. Those are not the only ways -- great if they work for some of you, but they are not the only way and may create a lot of negative consequences in some families or for some children. I figure if your children are as old as they are now, you've

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tried a few things, Kimberly. I hope the website and Dr. Laura's methods are helpful for you and maybe some others here. If not -- cool, do what works for you.

Amy Clark Kleinpeter, Texas

I don't have kids, but I do work A LOT with kids - especially Junior High aged. (And I was one once.)

I prefer to outline the rules at the very beginning. Then I have them explain to me all the possible reasons for having that particular rule. I have them agree the reason for the rule is for their benefit. I ask them to help each other stay within the rules and to report anyone doing anything that will hurt themselves or someone else.

Next I explain the consequences for breaking a rule. I tell them they have a choice. (It puts THEM in control). They can have either the FREEDOM to operate within the boundaries, or they can have the consequences. I do not micro manage if they are operating within the boundaries.

My consequences are usually "being chained to me for half a day doing adult stuff, which isn't all that fun." in other words a one-on-one chance for me to have a real conversation with that child for half a day about their life, what they want, how they operate; and it gives me a chance to give them tasks to see if they have skills/talents I can use to encourage them.

I love this system because I get a real chance to reach the ones that (like me) get in trouble to get attention, and to try to intercept the ones truly going down the wrong path.

I've been blessed to watch the light go on for some of my most challenging kids. Its hard to say who gets more out - them or me.

AnnMichelle Hart, Washington

Hi,

I will offer a disclaimer: People love our kids and comment on their amazing behavior, but we are seen as overly harsh and strict parents by most of those same people. They never stop to think that our children's behavior is a result of our parenting. Taking my advice could land you in the same position.

First, we don't have any rules for no reason. Every rule has a good reason and the kids know what it is. No rules may be broken. Ever. Why? Because there is a good reason for the rule. That reason is not disappearing for

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your convenience. If the reason legitimately does not apply to a situation, then of course, the rule would not apply either. In these situations, the kids feel like they got away with something.

We have three types of consequences. First, and most important, are natural consequences. For example, the children are not allowed to jump on the bed (because it will break the springs in the mattress). They decided to jump on the bed anyway. One of them fell and hit his head against a window frame. He wasn't permanently hurt, but he did need two stitches near his eyebrow. That was a natural consequence of breaking the rule.

The second type of consequences are ones that we inflict intentionally. For example, I told my son (then 5 years old) that if he didn't get out of bed and go to the shower, I would bring the shower to him. He did not get out of bed, so I threw cold water in his face. Ever since, we have had no trouble motivating our children in the morning. This was a great inflicted consequence because it hurt nothing and was very effective.

The third type of consequence is a hybrid. Once upon a time, I asked my son to load the dishwasher (then 8 or 9 years old). He refused. I reminded him that the house functions because we all cooperate. I reminded him that if you don't cooperate with others, they will not cooperate with you. He went to bed without loading the dishwasher. The next day: I did not wake him; I did not make his breakfast, lunch or dinner; I did not help him get to school; he suddenly had no toys in his room; he was not allowed any screen time; and, I did not cooperate in letting him play with his friends. In less than 24 hours, he apologized for not cooperating and loaded the dishwasher. Everything went back to normal.

Generally, positive consequences (rewards) are far more effective, but sometimes you need negative consequences too. Positive consequences also can be natural or inflicted.

Now, I'm not completely a drill sergeant. I have always had the basic philosophy described in *Free Range Kids* - of course within bounds of our basic rules. And, now that the kids are a little older (turning 10 & 12 this summer), I think I need to re-read *Teenage Liberation Handbook*. I recommend both of those books.

This message was approved by my son. :)

All the best,
Ari Hornick, California

Time-out seems to work better for younger kids. We used timeouts, and they worked well, but for the times when a child (usually our son) would not take a time out, I would roll him in a blanket like a burrito. That way, I

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could hold him down with one hand while reading a book in the other. I'd just wait for him to fall asleep. If he was freaking out that much, it was usually because he was tired. Otherwise, he would have to calm down and agree to take the time-out to earn his freedom. Adults have told me more than once that they'd rather be spanked. lol

Ari Hornick

Suffocation? No, I didn't cover his head. Every other part of him was covered, but not his head. Claustrophobia? No, if he had that disorder, I would've chosen a different strategy. There was nothing dangerous about this technique. It caused no type of harm whatsoever.

He's a little big for that approach now, but it was great while it lasted.

All the best,
Ari Hornick

Okay. It sounds like you had the situation under control. :-)

Joshua Smith, Idaho

My favorite phrase from that essay is "false sympathy". It's a candidate for most common parenting error.

All the best,
Ari Hornick

Jo is right:

I second everything Carolyn Elefant said.
Forget "discipline." Forget yelling. Forget consequences. Relax!
Concentrate on being loving, supportive, encouraging, helpful.

I was raised in a household by my ex-Navy disciplinarian father, and as soon as I came of age with some money in my pocket I moved to the opposite coast. I had to break the relationship because they didn't teach me how to put it first. My inclination was to revert back to that type of fathering, but my good wife changed my mind.

It is the relationship with your kids that should be paramount. You have to make it worth -- ACT like it -- what you believe it will cost if you suffer

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the loss of it. This means you end up talking to your kids a lot about the options in front of them, how to weigh them, and essentially how to build good judgment and a loving balanced attitude to people around you. We started this sometime between ages four and five. Our daughter is getting ready to go to college and our son is in 10th grade, but we still hold monthly family meetings about issues pertinent to the household, which can be scheduled by anyone of us, and we encourage their input and try to use their solutions where possible. It really works for us. We're trying to teach them to act responsibly with the liberty God gave them.

Our children have begun to ask us why we are one of the few intact families around. We share with them that our relationship, husband and wife, then our relationship with them are our priorities, regardless of what State we live in, what jobs we may hold, or what other speed bumps or false accelerators life happens to inject into our environment. It is steadfastness, loyalty, and love that strives for a "till death do us part" approach that makes a family strong. I am confident they will be able to build this for themselves.

And, awesomely, I get to give all the credit to my wife. What could be a better outcome?

Regards,

Arthur B. Macomber Idaho

Here's what I say. Throw out all the childrearing advice about consequences, stay off Facebook (where most of your friends will appear to have the most clever, kind, smart, creative and diligent kids ever so you will always feel lacking) and just remember that this behavior will pass. Kids mature at different rates. I had three younger sisters and we were all different. By the age of 5, I (the oldest) made sure that I was in bed every night by 7 (I'd get antsy if I couldn't get to bed by then) and was always ready for the bus 20 minutes early - in fact, I insisted that my sister wait with me out on the driveway even on the coldest days just to be sure we didn't miss it. My other sisters varied in levels of responsibility and in fact, my youngest sister couldn't get up for school without my parents driving her until she was a junior in high school. Yet today we are all functioning adults with families of our own, living independently w/out parental support since the day we graduated college, with 10 college and graduate degrees between us. The irony is that my youngest sister - the "slacker" - now has a rigid schedule for her sons' meal and bedtimes and she gets up at 4 am 4 times a week to work 10 hour shifts in her job as a chemist at a pharmaceutical company. You just never know.

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My older daughter, who will graduate college this year was also routinely late - so much so that we couldn't carpool with other families. She also lost homework (or did it but didn't turn it in on time), had a messy backpack, room and locker. After yelling, insulting, criticizing and trying the consequence thing with no luck, I just gave up. (Actually, we did use the consequence thing when she lost or broke a phone or electronics in that she would not get a replacement until her next birthday or holiday - it didn't help the first 5 times, but made me feel better). Thereafter, I drove her to school as needed, wrote notes when she was late, ignored the backpack (or fumigated it every summer) and just waited it out. She finally got her act together by the middle of 10th grade and now that she's a senior and I've encouraged her to go in late or cut class (just to have a full senior experience), she refuses because she doesn't want to compromise her grades even though technically, it doesn't even matter any more. She is also responsible and helpful now that she has a drivers' license - she fetches her sister from school, cooks dinner once or twice a week and does some of the grocery shopping. So despite the lax upbringing, I don't think she grew to be entitled or spoiled.

Like you, I spent a lot of time yelling at and criticizing my daughter and I know that she still holds some of it against me - particularly because her sister was easier and so from her perspective, we favored her sister.

I'm not saying that you should be a pushover - and if there are reasons behind the behavior (like ADHD, allergies or medical issues), you should certainly explore those and seek treatment if necessary. But at the end of the day, ask yourself whether it's worth it to damage your relationship for something that will pass.

I know I am in the minority on this view - but it worked for my parents and seems to have turned out OK for me.

Carolyn Elephant, Washington, D.C.

So...none of us has all the answers with kids!

I have a morning dawdler. Actually, she's generally a dawdler at most things - she's also very social and creative and just a joyful person. One technique that we've used on her with some success is a timer. She has X minutes (and we set a timer for her) to get dressed, brush hair, etc. in the morning. If she gets to the table with all that done, she gets (within reason) what she wants for breakfast, then after so many minutes to eat (usually 20+), has 5 minutes to brush her teeth, put on shoes, and meet us at the door. If she's early, I'll do her hair for her (I know, probably not much of an incentive for a boy!) If not, she also has to brush her teeth before breakfast and she and gets a few slices of bread and bottle of water on the way out the door. If she's late after breakfast, she gets shoved in the car without her shoes (which she really doesn't like) and

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given them to put on in the car. She's never refused to do that, but if she did, I'd just drive them to the bus stop, carry her out to the bus stop from the car and make her put on her shoes in front of her friends.

After a few mornings of the timer, she decided she'd rather waste her time at the breakfast table than in her room before breakfast (which makes sense, given how extroverted and social she is). We don't even need to use the timer much any more, other than for piano (below) and sometimes cleaning chores. She even asks for it sometimes. She also hates it when we "count down" aloud how long she has to do something, but for some reason hasn't really minded the digital timer/alarm. I think she feels she's more in control that way.

For this child, it is also VERY important that she gets enough sleep. She is 7, but goes to bed by 8 pm every night (and gets up just before 7 am). She requires more sleep than most people, but if given enough sleep, wakes up in a good mood.

Timer has also worked well on piano practice, but we let her set the timer. I passed this info along to her teacher, and she's used it a few times on her with success in the classroom as well.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

This got long, I tried to shorten, but most responses are long, so here goes. Overall, notice my answers were to first instill, then establish boundaries, prepare for situations in advance, and this can be described as shaping - not controlling - my children.

In my experience raising three children, reactive doesn't do the trick, proactive does. I actually think that makes for the best environment no matter what the setting. It sounds like you react and have the majority of your interactions when there is already no way out except to fight with him. The interactions where nothing negative is going on seem to be missing for you.

I am very interested in this topic because, without the details, I grew up in a harsh and negative, and at times very abusive, confusing environment. To break the cycle (which I did) it did not work to say what I will NOT do in my own family. Without a "what I will do" figured out in advance, for everything, I would not have done as well. I also read books and had relationships with great parents I looked up to and learned from. If you seek mentors, you might get ideas you wouldn't think of yourself.

I was the daydreaming, right brain, creative, free-spirited child and grew up in a room with a sister one year older who was focused, left brain math/science oriented, nitpicky, neat and precise - who once separated our

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room with duct tape so she could have her clean (to me boring looking) space. I actually sometimes didn't have my mom on my case to get more disciplined, my sister was good enough. Without creating competition, maybe your people pleaser son could have an influence? And vice versa?

I think you need to plan ahead and think of INSTILLING things in a thought out way (not just rules, not based on getting rid of negatives - overall thinking about how to help them be responsible and be happy they have that trait). I suggest you never warn in a situation that if it continues you will punish in some way. It's hard to instill an expected norm during a disagreement. You're out of control of your emotions with the yelling. You also look to them like you're helpless and grasping at straws. Kids actually respect us less if we lose control. If you haven't planned in advance how to handle it, at least do a timeout (for yourself too). Always apologize to your children if you behave badly.

Our oldest was the one who pushed against boundaries, and was a daydreamer/creative type also. We had a deep and very good relationship, but we butted heads too. When I spent time thinking I realized his problem fighting with me over things is because he did not accept the boundaries even after we established them, when he got annoyed about me enforcing them. It was my job to set them in advance and in a proactive way. I'd remind him we already established that, for example, a certain amount of time playing video games was the boundary. No re-thinking whether you accept that I can tell you it's time to stop playing when I actually do that and argue against it all over again. That's going backwards (he could understand that concept). ONLY if a problem like his arguing when he had to stop playing persisted since we already established it, he was told in advance he'd have it taken from him for a period of time in response. I got ahead of the problem. It worked to help him get away from his obsession. Believe it or not, he also began being able to recognize that he was obsessed because we went over the signs (at a positive time). He was positive about working with me to address it. We once agreed to put the video game console on the top shelf of his closet for a while so he could distance himself from it.

In our family, our second was just about never a problem. I don't attribute that exclusively to his innate personality. If the other brother is paving the way teaching what the parent will have a problem with, another kid may not do those things b/c he has the advantage of learning it through watching what the other experiences. That kid seems naturally better behaved. He gets positive reinforcement also, even if the parent doesn't realize they are sending that message to one and not the other. Is it possible your oldest is affected that way and he can't have all the credit for being so eager to please? Is it possible that he prefers the sunnier position with you in comparison, maybe even in part because he's competing, or has become affected by your yelling at your other son and afraid he'll have to be the brunt of it if he does the slightest thing wrong? I would

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consider in your situation whether the amount of eagerness to please isn't actually a total positive. How can he develop healthy autonomy? Your second one is frustrating, but possibly more secure and confident (in the good ways).

My husband and I talked privately, and came up with approaches and both did the same things. Consistency is important.

Example of proactive:

When he does something you like - "I like the way you put your trophies nice and neat on your shelf and got rid of the clutter. That looks great."

Reactive/negative:

"Your shelf is sloppy and full of junk! Clean it up and clean the rest of your room too."

The first one worked for me. When my kids cleaned their rooms after that, they took pride in getting rid of clutter. Later, I did the same with other things. Eventually, they took pride in the whole job and their room looked great - me not involved at all.

Sometimes I did things like made a game of having them go to their room after the house was really clean and neat. They had to come out and figure out what was different and fix it. I pulled out couch cushions, tossed a candy wrapper on the floor, etc. They'd rush to tell me when they came out what they saw, and would fix it. Next time they were to clean up, it was automatic that they'd toss trash and neaten up couch cushions b/c they noticed them. Can you go over in advance the routine for the morning and play a game like that? Get him to notice one thing at a time, give him positive reinforcement, and then what doesn't happen in the future is an anomaly, not the norm.

I did not have to nag my kids in the mornings. They had their own alarm clock at a pretty early age, which seemed to make them feel more mature.

I also warned my son in advance of some things we don't notice that affect us, so he could also get ahead of things. For example, if we got in late or he slept at someone's house and stayed up too late: "You're going to be tired tomorrow." I told him we get irritable and whatnot. Here are the signs. Please control yourself and don't take it out on the rest of us b/c it's only because you missed sleep.

I agree with everyone else on consequences. The natural ones like getting to the bus with your shoes off are really effective. Life creates consequences for all of us, and they have to get used to that.

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I do not have children with the needs that Erin children have. I would not attempt to advise in that way. But, you may want to see if there are any signs of something like that that should be addressed.

Donna R. Ireland (not a lawyer), New Jersey

Carolyn - you're not in the minority in all ways. My post was long and had to do with shaping behavior. But my husband and I absolutely picked our battles. I had to learn to do that. But, we were kind and understanding in general. They did outgrow some things that just weren't worth worrying over when they were kids. It is perfectly acceptable in my view not to be picky about everything. Some people still are the less rigid and more free-spirited thinkers when they grow up. Some of them work at places like Google where those things are positives.

Donna R. Ireland

Erin,

I never read that one. I don't recall ever reading one related to special needs.

My sister raised a son who has Tourette's that affected his brain function also. He suffered so much as a child. My sister worked full time. Her marriage didn't work out. One reason is her husband drinks, is an angry person, and he hated that he had a son like that and was very forceful with him. He was like that even when my nephew was preschool age. He was like that during visitation, so my nephew eventually wouldn't go stay with him - and his father didn't fight it because the feeling was mutual. My sister studied everything there is to study about Tourette's (and OCD, which he had, and oppositional defiant disorder, which he had, and mild mental retardation, which he had). She had an uphill road every step of the way. My nephew is now grown, and on my sister's behalf I am so proud of what she did all those years. I will add that because of our background, she was missing some pieces as well. She looked to me for advice sometimes with her son and also her daughter (who has no special needs). Those were general things, and some of them helped her. I'm five years older and had my kids much younger so that was natural. But, when all is said and done, no way could many things from my own experience touch what she had to do.

Donna Ireland

OMG, I am your middle child. My older sister is your oldest. Which makes it so much harder for parents to cope when the older child is generally good and the next one is ... mmm .. has his moments shall we say.

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First off, you cannot discipline them both the same way. Obviously a mere frown works with one, and not with the other. Yes, you can have different rules for different kids. That doesn't mean the little hellion gets away with things, it means he is treated differently than his brother.

Second, time out. Honestly and truly it was the only thing that worked. When things are getting all harried, you make the kid sit completely still for 10 minutes. When a kid is energetic like to run around, etc. having to sit still drives them crazy. It drove me nuts.

Three, get creative. For cleaning my room, I blocked out different things -- picking up the floor, dusting, making the bed, and figured out how long each would take. Then set the timer. Finishing before the timer went off got my competitive streak going.

Four, breathe. This too shall pass. I turned out relatively okay, mostly follow the law (they are speed suggestions not speed limits), and try to be a good person. SO a kid who tries to defy authority is not necessarily going to grow up to be a serial murderer. In fact, will someday (far, far, far in the future) appreciate that you set boundaries and consequences for violating them.

Elizabeth Pugliese, Maryland

If this is true -- be very nice to him NOW. Because you want him to care for you in your old age in the manner to which you would like to become accustomed.

Elizabeth Pugliese

Do you live at my house???

I have 2 boys, one is now 14 (OMG) the other is 11.5. Yes they are like night and day. My oldest is also a perfectionist (it stems from anxiety for him). When he was younger he had to have a ton of control and would dig in when he felt out of control.

My youngest, who is VERY hyperactive which leads to skipping almost every detail, acts like he doesn't care most of the time (which isn't really true, it's just easier to ignore and hope it goes away as his coping skill).

Never expect them to react the same and do not expect one child to be able to do what the other does. One issue we deal with quite a bit is that the boys are close enough in age that my youngest expects to get the same

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treatment as my oldest, but lacks the maturity and responsibility to handle the same situations. We dish out things based on what we think the child can handle and not their age. Which is why my oldest had a computer in his room at 10 and my youngest is still no where near being able to do that.

We started a long time ago with the understanding of 2 things,

- 1) we had to pick our battles
- 2) we had to give them more say and giving orders in our house wasn't going to work 75% of the time

So it comes down to this

If I need chores done I ask would you like to do dishes or fold laundry.
If one baulks (that would be my youngest) it becomes would you like to do dishes, laundry or lose electronics for the rest of the day.

Then we follow through and when we follow through we remind the child that they **CHOSE** this path. It is very rare that within 5-10 minutes the child hasn't changed their mind and complies.

In the mornings, we don't fight about getting ready. I ask if he took his meds, brushed his teeth, and has all his stuff. If he didn't do it, he suffers the consequences. I have sent him out the door to the bus, shoes and socks in hand because he wasn't ready. I've sent him out the door without breakfast because he wasn't ready (though I usually slid it into his backpack for later on).

While we like to insulate our children from ever being embarrassed or teased or all those negative things that can happen, those things are also teaching tools for real life. I would rather my kids learn it at 10, when they are still in the home and I can guide them, then learn it at 20 when the world is a lot bigger and they have a lot more power to make things worse.

Reading Material

The Explosive Child
1 2 3 Magic (which my kids failed)

Erin M. Schmidt, Ohio

We gave up on my youngest's room a long time ago. it is far easier to just shut the door.

And yes praising for what they have done, even when it's not 100% right works. We still smile with a thank you that looks so much better and you did a great job, when he's shoved all the stuff in the closet or under the bed.

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We also leave school at school. So all those missing homework, he has to deal with the consequences from the teacher. At home it's only about giving lip about having to do homework (and stop playing minecraft)

Erin M. Schmidt

The very first thing you learn in the book *The Explosive Child* (which in many special need groups is basically a bible) is to pick your battles.

What many folks don't realize is that the techniques that work with special needs kids also work really really well with all kids

Does it matter if the kids clothes match or not? Or if they are perfectly put together? If they like stripes with plaid, well so be it. You've got bigger fish to fry, like keeping them from running out into traffic

Erin M. Schmidt

Also now that they are teens/pre teens we no longer "solve" all their problems for them.

I do the same routine with my kids as I do my clients when they come to me about what the other one has done.

Is someone dead? Is there blood? Is anything broken?

Okay so do you REALLY want me to solve the problem (my youngest usually says yes, my oldest is usually backing out of the room slowly) because if the problem is your fighting over the computer MY solution is that there is no computer.

Everyone's problems are solved

Amazing how quickly they are able to set up a rotating fair schedule for computer time after that, with me only injecting that if they can't agree the result is neither gets any.

Erin M. Schmidt

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Explosive-Child-Understanding-Chronically/dp/0061906190>

The description for the explosive child

What's an explosive child? A child who responds to routine problems with extreme frustration-crying, screaming, swearing, kicking, hitting, biting, spitting, destroying property, and worse. A child whose frequent, severe

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outbursts leave his or her parents feeling frustrated, scared, worried, and desperate for help. Most of these parents have tried everything-reasoning, explaining, punishing, sticker charts, therapy, medication-but to no avail. They can't figure out why their child acts the way he or she does; they wonder why the strategies that work for other kids don't work for theirs; and they don't know what to do instead.

The other author I would suggest for difficult kids is Stanley Greenspan (who developed Floortime for autistic children, which has spread out to other conditions and NT kids)

Many of these approach are about figuring out what is making the child tick, so that you can be proactive versus reactive. And once you learn that specific child's "currency" you can then modify your parenting to those ways in which the child best responds.

I know with both my kids that I can make demands until I am blue in the face and I am not going to get anywhere. They will dig in their heels and all we will do is battle. But by changing a few words here and there and coming at it from a different approach, I get the exact result I want, without the fights.

Does it always work.. no, but that is because things change and yes we aren't always as good at it after a long day at work as we should be, but we get quickly reminded about how important using the right approach is.

This winter was hard because my youngest decided to push all the buttons he could, all winter long and since it was so cold outside I couldn't toss him out to go play off some energy and get some separation between the 2 boys (the oldest is an introvert who needs his alone time, the youngest is an extrovert who can get a bit nutty and panicky if he is left to fend for himself for more than 30 minutes)

Erin M. Schmidt

We prefer ice packs to the bottom of the feet..

It leaves us one less mess to clean up (wet bed)

I've not gone so far as to not do anything the next day, but I am very known to say i am sorry I can't take you to baseball practice on time because I still have to do A, B and C (after I have asked them to do A B or C). It's amazing how fast B and C will get done

I have completely cleaned out rooms before leaving nothing but dresser with clothes and the bed

Erin M. Schmidt

We take away and then allow the child to earn it back early by making good choices, but we have only been able to implement that with my youngest more recently

I haven't yet ran into a behavior therapist that promotes 1, 2, 3 magic, but that may be it's because the type of kids it works with never make it to a behavior therapist.

And I couldn't stand the just put your kid in time out advice we always got when the boys were younger.. Time out would have been one of us holding the child in a restrain hold for several minutes. We needed intervention BEFORE we reached that point.

My youngest will tell you, when he's getting into trouble we are the meanest most hateful parents in the world (while my oldest rolls his eyes) . We are just glad that he is finally catching on that his choices dictate a lot of things (and that HE isn't bad, it was just a bad CHOICE)

Erin M. Schmidt

That was part of my son's sensory diet in early elementary school. They would roll him in a blanket and then have him visualize himself as a caterpillar, all wrapped up into his cocoon who would then emerge as a calm butterfly.

He loved it so much that he would ask to do it at home when he started feeling frustrated

Erin M. Schmidt

A bit late to the party, but try reading, *Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child, Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition: Eliminating Conflict by Establishing...* by Robert J. Mackenzie. I think every parent should be given this book when they give birth. It is the most helpful bit of advice on how to avoid all those power struggles. I have 3 boys, now ages 23, 21 & 16, and unfortunately, I didn't read this book until my oldest was about ready to leave for college. But, I promise, it will help with EVERY single problem that arises in your future.

Regards,

Evelyn W. Zawatsky, Rhode Island

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I have two very similar children (and a third who is only 18 months, so she's not a consideration, really). The older one is more often disciplined (and then, mildly) for being forgetful, so we have helped her by developing memory cues, etc.

The second one is much more bull-headed. My wife and I went through quite a time disciplining ourselves not to scream and yell and nag and etc. with her. We soon realized that, because kids adapt, the screaming was simply having no effect, and the occasional spanking was similarly ineffective. So we had to get creative and learn more about her, and learn more about ourselves as to why screaming was not working. Now, we scream much less, and occasionally, when the situation warrants, it has much more effect due to minimal use.

It may be that your son, as strange as it sounds, is now comfortable with the yelling, and that seems "normal" to him. Stop yelling and simply impose punishments for failure to meet the morning needs.

For instance, do you think that simply putting up a list of things that must be done before a certain time in the morning, along with consequences if the list is not complete, would work better? Something on a whiteboard or printed that he can check off? This might play into his creative side. Plus, it is a "natural consequences" thing - he is informed ahead of time what the punishment will be, and you simply follow through with it. No fuss - no muss - no screaming needed. For example, no finishing the list by 6:50 means no iPod for a day or two days. If the iPod is taken away for five days in a row, it's donated to a local charity and he can buy one in his own time. Or, find something less important and follow through - then he'll know you're serious.

If he complains, all you need do is note that he was informed well ahead of time, and this is how adults do things in the real world. No complaint filed timely = personal injury suit dismissed due to statute of limitations = potential questions from the attorney discipline commission.

I will note that, kids being smart, if you give in and don't follow through, it will get worse because he will know that he can whine through a punishment.

Also, reading a bit on family-systems therapy (and having gone through some myself), it may take a bit of time for this to sink in, and he may actually behave worse for a period of time, in order to try to get you to yell at him. Expect it. Stay the course.

And, for us, putting our second in time-out and ourselves in time out was a great way to diffuse the situation. If he refuses time out, make that one of the list consequences.

My two cents.

Jonathan A. Watson, Michigan

+1 for Carolyn.

I'd only add that much of it seems to be biology. The thought that children come mostly pre-wired takes a lot of pressure off of the parent. Toss the

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books. Follow your intuition. Make mistakes and get over them quickly.

One observation (not a solution, just an observation) ...

I've noticed my children have what I'll call a "sweet spot." When they're engaged in an activity that is not too easy and not too challenging, they become immersed. They are eager to learn. They are open to suggestion, open to persuasion. There is no need to nag at that moment.

One other observation ...

This line seems to help me feel better: "This is exactly why I love your siblings more than you." ... And, "No, I'm not going to pay for your therapy when you're older. This is your own dam* fault." bwahaha :-)

Joshua Smith, Idaho

I'll go ahead and say it. Nobody roll kids up in a blanket and hold them down with your hand. That sounds a bit dangerous: suffocation, panic from claustrophobia. You should avoid that one Ari.

Although ...

I've had children wake up with night terrors. There was nothing my wife or I could do to calm the child. I picked her up and carried outside with me into the frigid night air (below zero). For some reason the cold brought her back under control after a short time.

I've also taken the timeout *with* a child before--both Dad and child go to timeout together. This is going to sound weird, but it seems to work if you hide your face and get below the child's eye level. I know, it sounds weird. But, if you go to timeout with the child and lay down on the floor and cover your face, that seems to have a soothing effect. Or just lay down on the floor while the child pitches the fit on the bed. It's weird but it seems to work with out of control kids, sometimes.

No rolling up in blankets though.

Joshua Smith

I read this about a year ago and liked it:
<http://theorangerhino.com/10-things-i-learned-when-i-stopped-yelling-at-my-kids/>

Julie S. Mills. Ohio

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Being a research nerd I read quite a few parenting books while all 4 of the kids were growing up. Considering that my oldest is 16 years older than my youngest that was quite a time span.

The method that I found most useful, practical and effective was 1-2-3 Magic by Phelan.

Ken Forman, Florida

WOW! Thank you so much for all the responses, I have been laughing at all your examples and feel so much better. I do identify with a lot of what you have all said. My middle son is very independent, loves to "invent" stuff. My husband has nicknamed him (not to his face) the evil genius. We believe he will invent something and become a billionaire someday. Thanks again for all the great responses and resources! You guys rock! Kim

Kimberly Vereb, Indiana

Kimberly, what Ari says below, add:

1-No two kids are alike. I have spanked Eldest Offspring up to 9 times in one week, Youngest Offspring less than 9 times in 14 years.

Study your kid. Do what study suggests.

2-Get a short, 5-page essay called "Know Your Men, Know Your Business, Know Yourself". It was written by an Army officer to young lieutenants, but raising kids and running a platoon are very similar. You'll find this easily on the web, if not, email me. I keep copies to give friends.

3-Nobody mentioned spanking. The only mammal that does not spank its young are the North American and European Liberals. Spanking, properly applied, works. For years it took a spanking just to get Eldest Offspring to focus on the problem at hand.

Now they are both taller than me, and both nearly black belts, that's a less attractive option. Enjoy it while you can.

4-We practice Perfect Obedience. That means instant obedience by Offspring to the letter and spirit of ANY parental order, not matter how trivial.

Failure means instant consequences.

5-All rules have exceptions. Don't raise kids to rule.

6-Most people raise their kids ass backwards: They let them run wild till puberty, then panic, and slam on the rules.

We started with Perfect Obedience. Now Eldest is nearly an adult, and gets much more freedom. I made the mistake of teaching him rhetoric (the school damn sure was not going to). Got my reward three

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weeks ago: A three-hour discussion (subject unimportant) replete with definitions of terms, references to the web to turn assumptions into facts, and careful analysis of syllogisms. Wonderful.

By puberty, Offspring should be semi-independent.

7-Consequences fit the crime. Eldest O. called to tell me he needed a ride from school. Rule is, he has to call before the bus leaves and clear it. He did not. He also failed to tell me he was not at school. I went to get him. Not there. Left. He called again - Oh, I was at X;s dad's office (also a place he sometimes gets picked up). So he walked nearly 5 miles home, with pack, lunch bag and his separate carrier bag. Tough beans, kiddo. I had other things already scheduled and I was not making 2 trips for his failure to communicate.

We had a native Chinese, first-gen mother, come to pick up her kid. She witnessed a few things that led her to shake her head and tell me, "You tougher on your kids than we are!"

I took that as a compliment.

Larry Frost, Minnesota

Not having any children myself I'll just say good luck. It sounds like the struggle my parents had with my sister, in which case..... yup good luck.

Sincerely,
Matthew Callis, Massachusetts

Try poking around Vicki Hoefle's site a bit.

<http://vickihoefle.com/blog/>

Her book Duct Tape Parenting is here:

<http://www.amazon.com/Duct-Tape-Parenting-Respectful-Responsible/dp/1937134180>

Best regards,
Max

L. Maxwell Taylor, Vermont

Erin is right on. Consequences. So if your middle child is not ready on time to leave to school, then you take him to school when he is still in his PJ's, he will learn very quick to get ready on time next time.

We have a 4 year year old who sounds like your middle boy. he likes to dawdle too, and who doesn't? But when it is time for him to go upstairs for a bath, or to get ready for bed, if dawdles too long, my one sure

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fire way to get him upstairs is to say "I am going to count to 5, and if you aren't upstairs by 5, I will carry you upstairs!" The inference being I will carry him like a baby, which he HATES!

Good luck.

Michael Blake, Connecticut

Prepare yourself for the ultimate geek answer:

The skills for planning, time management and organization fall under the umbrella of Executive Function. Executive skills operate from the prefrontal cortex. This is the last part of the brain to develop, and it develops at a different rate for different people. It is not fully developed until age 25. There is evidence to support the theory that there is a 2 - 3 year lag in development of the prefrontal cortex for kids with ADHD.

Executive skills can be learned. There are many good books on the subject. Once you can put this in context, it is far less aggravating.

I have a house full of folks with Executive Function deficits. My husband is a really bright successful attorney, but would lose his head if his support staff didn't help him keep it attached. He is unwilling to recognize his deficits and blames the rest of the world for his disorganization. He insists that his level of chaos is typical (it's not).

My kids have similar deficits but I have been working with both on this. My daughter (age 15) read a book on the subject and felt relieved that she could actually do something about her epic disorganization. Since implementing the strategies she has had her best term in school ever. She is happier and far less stressed. She also knows that when things start to feel out of control, she has slipped back into her old ways and is able to self-correct. For my 11 year old (with substantial learning impairments) I have implemented a structure around him. That helps him to get himself up and organized and ready to go. No more missing homework either. It is work for all of us to stay on track, but those in the family invested in a solution have found success.

I will list some of the books I found helpful:

Smart But Scattered by Dawson and Guare
That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week by Homayoun
Late, Lost and Unprepared by Cooper-Kahn and Dietzel

Michelle Kainen, Vermont

Not to minimize the issue, but it appears that you have a "birth order" behavior issue - the eldest is always pleasing his parents, youngest gets the attention, and the middle is a rebel of sorts (and probably missing attention the most with the birth of your youngest). There is a lot of scientific / pop-culture research on the topic, so maybe this helps in how you approach your children.

All the best,

Murtaza Sutarwalla, Texas

You've gotten a lot of good responses.

Let me just focus on a narrow issue in your post, which is getting the middle child ready for school. The laissez faire approach, which some have generally advocated, doesn't really work here, because going to school is not like cleaning your room or eating your vegetables. He HAS to go, on time, and the fact that he doesn't seem to care about it can be infuriating.

I suggest a couple of approaches, some of which you might already have tried.

1. I'll tell your teacher. It's amazing how kids have no problem with their parents knowing they are animals, but shudder at the thought of their teachers hearing the slightest inkling of bad behavior. So maybe a calm: if you're not ready in time for the bus (or carpool, or whatever), you will go to school late, and I will tell your teacher that you were late because you refused to get dressed (or whatever the reason is).

2. Consequence. A neighbor made their kids walk to school, which was >mile away, if they missed the bus, for any reason. (I would always drive my kids if they missed the bus). This might or might not work. It is also far harder on the parent than the kid; it takes a special fortitude to send the kid out crying for the long trek to school. Depending on where the school is, this might not be possible. Consequence could also be automatic loss of something desirable if he's late. TV time, computer game time, dessert, whatever works.

There's also a difference between intentional disobedience and general slothfulness (eg. "I will not get dressed now" v. moving incredibly slowly through the morning). Some kids are not morning people just like some adults are not. While it seems unusual for an 8 or 10 year old, I suppose it's possible. But if he's not actively disobeying you, consequences won't really work. The solution there would be get him up earlier, keep reminding him to get ready, etc.

Of course, kids have infinite stamina for finding ways to drive parents crazy, so if you solve this little problem, another will pop up.

Patrick W. Begos, Connecticut

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Read the book "How to behave so your kids will too". It worked so well that my two boys took to hiding it from me.

Paul Hogan, California

Agree w much of this although I never saw the essay mentioned.

Re spanking it certainly has its place but it has to be done with intelligence and not in anger. We have four children ages 22-4 and each is different. My wife and I have spanked our kids but I don't think I have spanked more than 10 times total all kids, and I frankly can't remember the last time I spanked any. My wife is probably the same. The kids know it is there if they deserve it and it seldom has to be used. Same to a lesser degree with yelling. I seldom raise my voice because the kids have learned that when mom or I speak we mean what we say, regardless of tone.

How to get there? Insist on obedience always and always promptly correct disobedience. No yelling, arguing or fighting. Just discipline and explain what you are doing (again no arguing, just so the kid learns, eg "junior, I asked you to take out the trash and you didn't, so no tv tonight. I love you very much but that is what happens". End of discussion). and the kids learn soon enough what to expect and become very comfortable and happy with the structure. It may be difficult and unpleasant at first and you may feel guilt but soon enough they fall into line. Whatever you do DO NOT back down and do not lose self control.

At the same time pick your battles and treat them with love and respect. Don't unnecessarily or reflexively say "no" to things (unless there is a reason of course) and don't be a tyrant. You will find that you will have to tell them less and less as they get older and there is less drama. Also the younger kids how it is with the older one so it gets progressively easier.

Kimberly, ordinarily I wouldn't think to be concerned about an 8 year old not getting ready on time in the morning. What concerns me is that you are yelling and he is laughing at you(!!!!?!!!!). That tells me he doesn't take you seriously in the least. I think you need to assert your authority with him before he gets much older. Don't be afraid to. In every interaction always insist on 100% obedience and always respond to disobedience. I think you need to do this now. Forget the yelling.

As far as getting ready in the morning maybe he just needs help in some simple ways so it doesn't become a battle. Get him to bed earlier and or wake him up earlier. Lay out his clothes the night before or check in on him as he is getting ready. Maybe a series of alarms. If you find him not getting ready in the morning is more than just dawdling and actually conscious disobedience, then start disciplining in response to each instance of disobedience. Send him off in his PJs, or without breakfast, or take away his TV time. What you do is not as important as the fact that you do it. He will learn soon enough if he is actively disobeying. On the other hand if he just needs help, give it to him. Either way, no yelling or battles.

There is much more to say here but I think you have gotten plenty of advice. Just be firm and consistent when you need to be (I can't emphasize how important this is) and show lots of love and affection. You will be fine.

Robert Weiss

This is all good advice (I think I need to read 1-2-3 Magic). We read a lot of Dr. Sears' books.

Part of giving a time out is to also give the parent a time to calm down and step away from the situation.

I find myself yelling at my children more often than I'd like to, and so breathing deeply and walking away from it helps calm myself down.

As long as they aren't in immediate danger, leaving it will only help. If they're late for school, oh well.

Consequences are helpful. Treating different children differently.

Following up on any threats you make is also key- don't threaten a punishment you aren't willing to follow through with. My daughter still remembers the time when she was 3 or 4 that my wife took her out of a store because she was throwing a fit, leaving behind a full shopping cart. She tells that story to her younger brother- "Mommy will do it, too!"

those are just my .02

I like these responses though!

Thomas Almquist, Florida

I agree with all of this.

"you can't agree on which TV show to watch? Ok, no TV"

we also use the idea of giving them choices, either of which is acceptable to us- "either go play outside, or stay in and help clean the house". They run outside, which gets them fresh air and exercise, and gets them out of my hair while I clean. Win-win.

Picking battles is very very important. Are they alive? Do they need to go the ER? Ok, what else is going on- what is important to YOU as the parent? Also, if there are two parents, it's important to agree on a united front.

there is no perfect answer for every family. That is an illusion.

Thomas Almquist

Thank you all for the collective wisdom. I learned from each post. I am struggling with similar discipline/raising issues as well.

Oldest child, 8 years old girl, very, very bright. Enrolled in gifted program at local reputable university. What was said about the theory that there is a 2 - 3 year lag in development of the prefrontal cortex for kids

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with ADHD also applies to gifted children (more like 4-5 years lag), as I learned in a seminar to parents of gifted kids.

1-2-3 magic, worked for my youngest very quickly but the oldest is one of those kids who never stop challenging and testing, and arguing and giving me white hair.

I am switching to a forget discipline approach with oldest (in the sense of no punishment because once punishment is applied - no computer, no iPad, no TV, etc. the fighting turns into re-gaining those privileges), and just let her learn the consequences as suggested in Parent Smart from the Heart (<http://www.amazon.com/Parent-Smart-From-The-Heart/dp/1425983030>). I don't apply the punishment as before, I let things go, until she needs something from me (ride to a friend's house).

Lots of talking to oldest child about her options and her freedom to elect how to behave (works with her because she craves being in control). She also wants to live as older than her age, so I've been incorporating a lot of discussion of what "permissions" and "perks" will be available to her when she becomes 14, 16, etc. years old with the caveat that they will be available if in the way to reaching those ages, she shows the maturity appropriate to the age every step of the way. Some things seem to be permeating in her head. But if that prefrontal cortex theory is true...I am starting to accept the limitations of any sort of effort I put into helping her make better choices.

Veronica Silva, Illinois
