

Dealing with challenging behaviour

Have you ever been faced with difficult behaviour and wondered 'How do I deal with this?' Sheila O'Malley has some ideas to help.

What's the purpose of the child's challenging behaviour? This behaviour can be tantrums, attention seeking, aggression, uncooperative. Challenging behaviour always invites a deepening of relationship and is an invitation for the parent to reflect on how they interact with the child.

See the behaviour as a cry out from the unconscious for the adult to see the child turmoil and respond correctly. The child is not trying to make life difficult for you; rather they are showing you how difficult life is for them. Their behaviour is 100% about them and not saying anything about the parent.

Ask yourself 'what is my child trying to draw my attention to?' Therefore, rather than punish, when we look behind the behaviour we are likely to get resolution rather than

through punishing; close off the only way they have of communicating their difficulty to us.

What lies hidden needs to be revealed. Therefore, it is better to seek to understand first, otherwise you meet the behaviour with your behaviour and the situation can escalate negatively

Responding effectively: Hit the pause button!

- Separate the child from the behaviour: "I love you, but will not accept that behaviour".

- Use 'I' messages: 'I feel upset when..' not 'you bold boy!'

- Stay calm, keep eye contact and do not get into conflict

- Seek first to understand; then to be understood.



- Talk 'with' not 'at' your child.

- Do not break relationship with your child.

- 'Time out' is for you-move away; if you are going to 'lose it'

There are two main reasons for problem behaviour, a feeling of not being loved enough, and low self esteem. The cause is usually found in relationships, how the child perceives self. If all behaviour makes sense; what is happening for the child?

What is my child trying to draw my attention to?

- Why is this behaviour happening?

- What is going on for my child?

- Who is it happening with?

- When is it happening?

- Where is it happening?

- What is taking place

Look at yourself:

- Ask yourself: How did I interact with him today?

- Was it: "Time to get up! Pick up your stuff. Look at this mess." etc.

- Did I have *any* positive interaction with my child?

- Did I treat him with respect?

- Did I affirm him not for what he does, but *who* he is?

Helpful Hints

- Unconditionally love your child for himself

- A problem behaviour that is

ignored *decreases* over time

- A behaviour that is noticed *increases*: 'I notice you are..'

- Catch the child being good, not bad!

- Request respectfully, don't order or command ('Bed, Now!')

- Parent using love, not laws and be flexible.

- Settle for less than perfection.

- Five hugs a day minimum

Remember:

- Your child is 100% dependent on you; and the withdrawal of love is their greatest threat.

- Blame the behaviour; not the child. It's easy to change *what* I do; but not *who* I am, 'bad boy'.

- By believing in your child's vast potential and intelligence, you ensure they feel capable and competent.

- The major cause of children's problems is how their parents relate to them. When parents are dominating, controlling, hypercritical children become insecure and manifest their feeling of rejection through behaviour.

When your child deserves your love the least, they need your love the most. Love heals.



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- average Leaving Certificate points (2008): 424
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Sheila O'Malley is a qualified parent mentor and trained with Dr Tony Humphreys. Practical Parenting offers: one to one parent mentoring, one day Saturday courses Mar 27, Apr 24, May 22, six-week evening courses Mondays and Wednesdays from mid April (April 12 and April 21), Glenageary: limited space left so book now. Parenting talks are available to schools/organisations. Visit www.practicalparenting.ie for more information or email info@practicalparenting.ie