

# Parenting

by Keri Tibbets

## Preface

This article was written as my interpretation of and years of experience with Jim Fay and Foster Clines Love & Logic. Love & Logic was written to an audience trained in the Prussian method of education. My intent was to provide families pursuing a classical leadership education with the same sound principles. Although the bulk of my ideas have origins in Love & Logic, what I am presenting is highly adapted and refined, even changed especially for these families. You will find herein a greater emphasis on the intent to truly love rather than mechanically “showing empathy” as taught by Love & Logic.

## Paradox

There is a paradox we often encounter as parents. We find ourselves stuck between what seems to be two opposing needs. The first is the need to teach our children responsibility, to teach them in a manner that will yield self-discipline, in which they can someday look back upon their lives and recognize that they were stretched and tried in ways that actually made them stronger. Fulfilling this need of ours can sometimes require great strength on the part of the parents. It may involve digging in and sticking to an established family value, following through with a consequence, perhaps remaining firm when we might be tempted to be soft.

The second is quite the opposite. It is the need to be closely connected with our children in a tight-knit bond of friendship and unconditional love. That they might someday look back upon their life and know that through the ups and downs, through the trials and tribulations, there was always someone they knew they could trust. One who understood them and loved them for who they were, regardless of their behaviors, accomplishments, strengths or weaknesses. Preferably it is their parent, to whom they knew they could always come to with anything, knowing they would not be judged. Fulfilling this need of ours can sometimes require quite the opposite skills and qualities as the former; not that of digging in, but of letting go, of relaxing, smiling, and understanding. It may involve bonding through play, being compassionate, kind, fun loving, and free-spirited, ergo happy.

The first need is to teach our children. The second is to have a loving relationship with them. The reason it feels like a paradox, is that often when we are finally being firm enough to get through to them, we are behaving in a manner that is severing our relationships rather than building them.

## Pendulum

Sometimes when this occurs we feel so badly for having broken down the very relationship we were working to build that in effort to mend it we loosen up in our teaching, lighten up in our training and in the name of love, we do some spoiling. Perhaps we remove difficult consequences or fail to follow through. This feels good in that it builds the relationship and helps us feel like friends again, albeit it feels bad at the same time because we are failing to fulfill our initial need to teach and train our children. We know deep down that we are not fostering strength within them, but instead weakness.

Having neglected our responsibility to train up our children, we again feel badly and swing the pendulum back the other way. We firm up, dig in our heels, and stick to our plan of discipline, whether it feels good or not. After some time with this firmness, we feel we have “done our duty as parents,” yet our hearts are again suffering.

When this occurs, we feel turmoil inside. We may ask ourselves, “Should I have spoiled the child and let them get away with such nonsense, so that we could have remained friends? Surely not!” However, “If I continue on this course which seems to destroy our good feelings toward each other, will we just wake up one day feeling like close, loving friends? Surely not!”

If we decide to really look into it, exploring our feelings, we may find that the turmoil need not remain an ambiguous ball of frustrating confusion, but that it actually grew out of two seeds. It has origins, and can thus be traced back to be rationally examined. The conflicting feelings we experienced were that of good and bad which seemingly sprang from the same action. This is why we feel confused. One action seemed to yield two opposing results: a good feeling and a bad feeling. In reality they sprang from two different actions. The good feeling came from fulfilling our responsibility to follow through and teach our children something that we feel strongly is our stewardship to teach. The bad feeling came from the manner in which we chose to teach it. We may have spoken in a tone of voice that communicates, “You’re really a difficult child.” Or perhaps we were speaking from a perspective of “I want to control you and make you do this right,” rather than “I want to help you discover right and wrong so that you may choose the rewarding fruits of right choices by your own free will.” It may have been that our choice of words communicated to the child that the love they receive from us is not unconditional, but rather based on their accomplishments.

Everybody wins!

What I would like to present to you is the idea that both of these needs, training responsibility and to freely loving can be met at the same time. In fact, they are not opposing principles in the least. Adherence to one actually enhances success in the other and vice versa. Let me explain.

### Proper training actually enhances the relationship

When we administer a good consequence to our children it causes the child to learn what we intended them to learn. We feel no frustration, but rather satisfaction. Where no frustration is felt there is no temptation to resort to anger, control, manipulation, bribery, or any of the ineffective methods of teaching that tear down relationships. We naturally feel calm and we exude empathy for the child in the predicament that they brought upon themselves. This is a feeling conducive to true friendship. This is a feeling that promotes unconditional love, because we feel loving and sympathetic toward our child *amidst* their folly. This also promotes relaxation in us as parents rather than stress or faultfinding. When we can see that our methods are working we feel pleased. All of the natural feelings that foster love and build friendships were brought about as a result of proper training and can consistently co-exist amidst it.

### Proper relationship building actually enhances the training

We as parents have an inherent need to foster strong relationships with our children. When we choose to do this through spoiling or giving away undue privileges we feel a counterfeit version of “good” that can seemingly satisfy us for a time as it evokes smiles and temporary positive feelings in the child. We as the giver of the gift may bask temporarily in this sunshine...this is called grand parenting ☺. If this goes on very long, we will feel drained. Spoiling involves giving those things away that we did not feel it was time to give (such as treats at the wrong time or for the wrong reasons). It means promoting children to that which our instincts told us not to promote them to yet, like allowing later bed-times or an extra friend, privileges we were reserving for another stage of life or even bending rules because of our need to feel a little “softer” for the time being. These actions will eventually wear on us and if left unchecked can wear us out because they are gifts that continually take from us. And when we are worn out and coming from a needy place ourselves instead of a whole place, we are in no place to adequately train our children. The spoiling then, that was only meant to build the relationship and not meant to have any effect on the disciplining, actually hinders our ability to properly train and teach.

When we choose to schedule time for strengthening relationships through wholesome means, we are left not at all drained but rather filled and in a healthy and whole place from which we can properly discipline and train. Such wholesome activities include listening, sharing happy feelings, learning and play. In this space we will feel up to the task and can adequately own the gifts and talents we uniquely possess that we need in order to train and teach our children in a manner which pleases us and in a manner which we would be proud to see duplicated by our own children as they meet their own challenging responsibilities. As so much of

parenting and proper disciplining depends upon listening to one's heart and being in tune with our children's and our own innermost needs, it is in our greatest interest to be working from a healthy and whole foundation rather than an empty and needy place. This foundation is built by showing love in ways that neither drain us nor wear us out, but that actually feed us as well as the child. This kind of giving does not take from us but gives back just as much or more in return, enabling us through the enjoyment of genuinely "good times" to feel like our best selves as we approach the challenging times with our children. Thus, proper relationship building actually enhances training and disciplining.

What does proper relationship building look like?

Proper relationship building can occur in hundreds of different ways. One way to know if it is proper is to simply identify if it is the kind of sharing that takes from you or if it is the kind that gives back. If it is giving back, it is sure to promote wholeness and healing. For example, If I give a child the privilege of staying up later than I had planned, only to erode my own free time at a time when I would feel better about not doing that, my gift to them causes a small deficit in myself and both parties are not enlivened and refreshed by the experience. Both parties are not more closely connected afterwards. This is called entertaining. It is draining because it did not involve the sharing of joy *together*. One party experienced joy, and the other experienced sorrow. When both parties share in the experience of joy together, the magic occurs and the closeness results. There is a time and a place for service, but even service ought to be service that we believe in and feel good about doing. If we feel good about it, it is feeding us. If we feel wrong about it, we ought not participate, as it will surely drain us of energy. The sharing of love and laughter must be sincere for it to have the effective results of bonding the two involved. If I get down on the floor and play dollies with my children, I personally do not feel refreshed and ready to face the challenges ahead of me. I feel as if my challenges have already begun. But if I find something that both of us enjoy, and carry it out at a time that blesses the family in its progression rather than hinders it, then there are sure to be sincere smiles shared all around.

Sometimes this takes place in the form of organized family activities like taking a picnic, reading stories at night, or playing in the yard together. Sometimes it happens from a routine as simple as asking each child around the dinner table how their day went and what they did during their free-time. It may be an evening routine where a few minutes of snuggling and visiting including sincere listening happens as a child is tucked into bed, or it could be one child's turn to accompany mom on her weekly trip to the grocery store. These moments also occur during most family work situations. As a child is chopping vegetables side by side their mother, the conversation can be one of stress and fault-finding, or it can be one of sharing, loving, and learning about one another. Often this bonding is hindered by a child's lack of manners, their faults, or even outright rebelliousness. As long as the parent can discipline in a manner that successfully teaches the child self-discipline

and feels good, the happy feeling in the home can remain and the magic of sharing and enjoying can continue. As it turns out, those positive feelings in the home are not contingent upon the child's behavior, but rather the parent's ability to properly deal with the child's behavior as it is not the child's responsibility to decide the environment and tone of the home, but rather the parents'.

Different forms of bonding will feel good to different parents, but the important part is to choose something you both can sincerely enjoy, which yields emotionally rather than costs, so that real smiles, laughter and love are shared.

Relationship building or destroying also occurs all day long throughout every single interaction between the family members whether intentional or not. One of the greatest ways that I know to strengthen a relationship with a child is to remain calm and loving in the midst of their misbehaving. It is also imperative that I carry out my training and disciplining with a voice as calm and sweet as when we are discussing happy topics. When this occurs, the child has now tested and knows that their parent's love is unconditional, because it does not change depending on the child's behavior. The child's circumstances may change (a time-out, an extra job, a loss of privileges, etc.) but the parent's love does not change, nor does their ability to express love. Successfully communicating sincere love during these difficult moments solidifies the love expressed during the happy bonding moments. Now the children know that their parent's feelings about them were sincere, strong, and unchanging. Unfortunately, when we resort to guilt, shaming, anger, or threatening, quite the opposite occurs.

### Two Pillars: Agency & Responsibility

The methods for properly training children can appear as vast and various as those of building relationships. However, in my experience, successful methods (which consistently evoke good feelings in the parents) always satisfy two specific requirements. They respect and allow agency in the child, and they take care of the parent's responsibilities or stewardships. By satisfying the demands of these two pillars, agency and responsibility, the inherent needs of both the parents and the children are met amidst the training and disciplining. Thus, the parent feels boosted and fed from the actual training itself, and the children feel, at the very same time, that their own needs (including the need to act according to their own free will) are being met. The children also learn by the parent's example, to healthily meet their own needs as they are able. They learn to care for themselves by listening to their hearts and making their own decisions accordingly instead of listening to peer pressure or letting others walk all over them. They can learn this because their parents always listened to and followed their hearts instead of allowing their children to walk all over them.

But how can this be? How can a parent follow their heart in taking care of their responsibility of teaching and training their child without infringing upon the child's agency? How can a parent possibly discipline a child effectively without stepping on the child's free will? If they allow agency, will they not become passive in their

efforts and forfeit their responsibility to successfully train the child? Will they not be spoiling if they allow the child the right to think, speak, and act as he will?

They will not if they are careful to completely satisfy the needs of both pillars: agency and responsibility. Let me explain. If I decide it is my responsibility to teach my child healthy eating habits, yet I want to allow them agency as to what to put into their mouths, I need only take care to offer healthy choices, then let them make those decisions between the foods on the plate in front of them. They may choose not to eat, and I will not infringe upon their decision not to eat. But I will not give away to them my responsibility of teaching them healthy eating habits. I will not open up the cupboard and ask, "What *would* you like to eat, since you don't care for what I'm serving?" If I were to do that, I would shirk in my responsibilities. Nor will I feed them a snack an hour later, thus catering to their pickiness. But if I go so far as to try to force them to eat or manipulate, bribe, or threaten them into eating what I am serving, I infringe upon their agency. If they were to ask for a snack, or for something else to be served, I would quickly take responsibility for the atmosphere of the home, which includes order at the table, and send them immediately to their room or somewhere else where they are welcome to say those things. Instead of infringing upon their agency and telling them what to say and not say, I would allow them the free exercise of their mouth and I would send them to a place where they may do so. If they ask for something other than what is being served and I stoop so low as to answer them, then I am catering to that behavior and actually encouraging it, which would definitely be shirking my responsibility for teaching the kind of order at the table of which I feel good. In essence, my intention is never to control them, it is only to administer such wise, effective and yet harmless consequences as cause them to desire to control themselves. I do not want to make them follow the rules of my home. I want, rather, to have them *want* to follow the rules of my home. I do not desire to make them speak softly when they are inside, saving their outside voices for the backyard. I want to make them desire it themselves, and to choose it themselves. I want for them to grow up in such a refined, beautiful, and heavenly home, that they are uncomfortable with anything less than their best, and thus choose their best by their own free will. However, if I allow them to destroy the quality of that environment by their own misbehavior, they will never know what that level of living feels like. How then will they ever be comfortable with it, and how will they ever choose it for themselves? In my experience, if I set the standard high, and keep it high, the children taste it and know that it is good, and set it up as their standard by which to compare everything else. They actually recognize goodness when they see it, hear it, smell it, and feel it, if they have been exposed to it.

I would call it brainwashing if my children were never allowed to do something wrong, or exercise their agency long enough to see how it feels to choose wrong. But they are allowed that at every moment of their lives. They are then quickly set back in line, through loving consequences, so that they are not allowed that behavior for very long, lest it should become a part of the environment in which they are raised. Because the bad manners ideally get shut down as quickly as they start up,

the children never quite get comfortable with the naughtiness. They know what it is, but they are not used to it. Now when they experience a home where the children are allowed to continue in bad manners and unruliness for long periods of time, or where the parents, in effort to train and teach the children, become involved in unruliness themselves, my children recognize it immediately and are uncomfortable with it. I do not think they realize that it is the exact sort of behavior they have tried many times to get away with! I do not think they really know that they would likely be acting the same way if they had been allowed to continue. They recognize that it does not feel as good as what they are used to. And what they are used to was established by their parents, not themselves. What they are used to feels good because it is beautiful, orderly, full of peace, quiet, and happiness, yet never at the expense of their agency. Let's look into a few examples of how to keep respect of their agency while upholding a high standard in the home.

Let's say I have a rule that children playing outside may play in the fenced backyard rather than travel around the neighborhood, mingling with whoever happens to walk down the sidewalk. If a child goes out of the yard, and I tell them to go back in and not to forget again, I am trying to fulfill my responsibility as mother and teach this rule I felt good about, but I am doing it in a way that tells them exactly what to do and reminds them of what to remember. Instead, I would like to handle things in a way that causes them to want to remember my rules on their own. Then I will not need to be available at all moments of the day hovering over them and telling them what to do, think and remember, thus attempting to control their lives. I want them to control their own lives, but they are too young to know what control is if I do not require it of them at first. If I say to the child who left the backyard, "Please come inside to play for today. I'll be happy to let you try again tomorrow to play outside," the child is then left to think on their own of what it was they did wrong, because I certainly did not point it out to them. When they do this thinking on their own, they remember it for a long time. When we rattle off do's and don'ts, rights and wrongs, commands and reminders minute by minute and day after day, the children do not need to do much thinking about what they did wrong because we are doing that thinking for them and reporting it to them play by play. When they are left with a smile, a hug, and a disappointing consequence from someone who loves them, believes in them, and will never find fault with them, they are left to figure out for themselves what they want to remember next time. The best part is, they think it up on their own, and so they own the new convictions themselves.

One time when my oldest two children were seven and eight, we had some neighbor children over to play. The backyard was filled with pretend houses made of trees, food made of grass, dirt, leaves, and all sorts of unrecognizable fun. The children were deep into their play. Noticing that it was half an hour before dinner time called out the window, "Time to get ready for dinner!" My children jumped up and began their routine chores. The neighbor children came running to me and begging, "Can't they do their jobs a little later, we were just right in the middle of playing and we just got it all set up?" I replied "That's up to them, you're welcome to ask them if they want to play longer." They stared at me quite confused, as if to say "What

planet are you from? Don't you know what will happen if we ask *them*?" When the glazed looks faded away and they came to, they excitedly ran outside to claim their victory. But after asking my children if they could do their chores later to allow more play time, they were told that they would rather get their chores done now. My standards were getting upheld that day, but it was technically the children who were choosing to uphold them. This does not happen all of the time. They often choose not to uphold my standards, and I believe it feels good to them to try out that choice and see what comes of it. However, they quickly get shut down by a consequence, and are not comfortable to ever becoming accustomed to a sloppy standard.

Let's see what it might look like if they had chosen not to uphold my standards in this particular moment. If I chose to fulfill my responsibility of teaching my children right from wrong, and to do it with respect to their agency, I would allow them to disobey, and suffer the consequence. I may let them go all the way until dinner time, call them in, eat a peaceful dinner together, and then break the news to them each privately, and compassionately, after the dishes are done, that they must go straight to bed and not stay up for our family activity that night.

If I were to deal with this same situation without respect to their agency, I might tell them out the window some controlling remark like, "Kids, I want you to start cleaning right when I ask you to." Or I may try to pressure them into obedience by belittling them with "I told you to start 5 minutes ago and no one has moved a muscle! How many times do I have to tell you before you'll listen?" I may try some gentle reminding, which is nicer but just as ineffective by stating "kids, it's almost time to eat, let's get this yard cleaned up." I may even try threatening with, "I'm only serving dessert to those that finish on time." Perhaps I'll try bribing by saying "Let's hurry and finish and when you're done we'll 'have a treat' ...or 'put a penny in the jar.'" None of these attempts, regardless of how gentle their delivery, feel good to a child because the intent of each of these statements is to control them. Whenever the intent is to control, the child will likely do one of two things. They will either resist their parent's attempt to control by procrastinating further, or they will give in to the control in order to be a "good girl or boy." Neither of these options is healthy. When a child resists, they create a need for tuning out their mother, procrastinating, moving slowly, almost as if they must to keep their will their own.

When a child gives in to their parent's will against their better judgement they learn to ignore their feelings; they learn to tune out what their heart is telling them. They may dismiss this inner voice long enough that they eventually grow up not knowing that they have an inner voice. This is especially counterproductive when it comes to peer pressure and even everyday decision-making. "What should I do?" people say, who do not know how to listen to their own heart. When a parent has mastered the arts of teaching and training, they actually help their child strengthen their inner voice by practicing listening to it. The parent actually acknowledges that the child has a conscience by saying things like, "you get to make that decision for yourself," or "what do *you* think you should do?" The simple act

alone of keeping quiet after an instruction has been given, and waiting to see what they choose just before administering a consequence fosters within them the idea that they are free to choose things for themselves. It suggests to them that they have a heart to listen to. Then when they need it someday, it will be there to guide them, and they will be practiced at listening to it.

When we ignore our children's agency, not only is the relationship then severed because of our attempt to control them, but we also hinder their chance for learning what it was we set out to teach them because we tell them what to do instead of leaving them with an undesirable consequence and some time on their hands to figure it out for themselves. Imagine the neuropath ways in our child's brain that are created, paved, and eventually set into stone as they must think over and over again through the entire process of why they are in their bed while their family is downstairs having fun without them, and what exactly they did wrong, or maybe it was a combination of wrongs. And finally, what they will do differently the next time. Now imagine the neuropath ways that are not created when we do all of that thinking for them and say things like, "If you don't hussle, you'll be in your room again tonight." Or, "Be sure and hurry so you can have dessert." Or, following a consequence that might have been a good one had we kept quiet and let them think about it on their own, "What did you learn from your experience last night? Did you think about what you did wrong? What can you do differently tonight so that doesn't happen again?"

How can we learn to respect our children's agency and fulfill all of our parenting responsibilities all of the time without pushing "pause" on our life and taking a few hours to analyze each situation. By following a few simple steps, we can train ourselves to communicate with our children in such a way that feels good to us both because both of our most basic emotional needs are being met.

I will explain these steps later, but I would like first to point out another method of parenting that is very common today that gives great respect to agency, but neglects the parent's responsibility to teach and train their children. It attempts to teach the children, but ends up avoiding it altogether. It appears to sit neither on the right nor left side of the pendulum because it is neither too harsh in its training, nor does it appear to be outright spoiling. It is neither black nor white, but very gray. It is my least favorite method because it is deceiving in that the parents think they are teaching, yet no correct principles are actually being learned. Sadly, it seems to be the most popular of all parenting methods today. I like to call it *carrying*.

During this kind of parenting, the parent attempts to teach the child correct principles, yet when the child resists, they, not being willing to give up altogether, and also not being willing to engage in a "battle" with the child, end up carrying the child through the challenging part of the learning experience. This way, the child experiences the correct principle, yet no uncomfortable, relationship-severing confrontations needed to occur. The first problem I see with this method is that the child only *experiences* the correct principle. He has not learned it. Learning occurs

when the child is able to accomplish something on his own. Learning has occurred when the parent is able to turn her back and return to find that the task was completed correctly by the child. The second problem I see with this method has to do with how incredibly deceptive it is to the parents. Because the task was completed, the challenge met, the parents seem to check it off in their minds as progression on the part of the child. If they were to look only slightly below the surface, they would find that instead of teaching their child to walk across the terrifying bridge of responsibility, they actually carried their child, thus allowing their child to avoid the bridge altogether. Because the child is safely across the bridge, it seems as if he learned to cross it. It appears as if a child has learned to do chores if their chores are done. But who really did the chores? Who remembered about the chores? Whose energy was poured into their completion? It appears as if a child has learned to stay in bed for the night when they peacefully stay in bed each night. But what bribes, threats, or assistance helped them to stay? How much time and energy does the parent spend each night “helping” them fall asleep? The point at which they have learned to stay in bed is the point at which they do it on their own.

One unfortunate result of the “carrying” method is the welfare mentality that it instills in our children. They remain “needy” after much training and teaching. This is a sign that no learning actually occurred. Yet because the parents tried, and they eventually got the result they were looking for, they are fooled into believing their child has learned something. The question they must ask themselves if they want to know if real learning occurred is “Who did the walking to get across the bridge?” Not, “Is the child across the bridge?”

A parent may believe that they require chores in their home simply because they insist on the chores being done, and by the end of the day the chores are done. A parent may believe that good manners are required of each person in the household just because they teach good manners, and they find that eventually they can pacify their children into behaving peacefully. But who is working around the clock to “make sure” these bridges are being crossed. If the children themselves are working hard to “make sure” that they are behaving and responsibly completing chores on time, then we can be sure that actual learning is taking place. Thus, it is not the end results that determine if our teaching is taking root; the end results could be too deceiving. It is, rather, the sustainability of our efforts which determine the success of them. Have we given effort to a system that now gives back, or must we pour daily that same amount of effort into our system?

If the parent must walk the child across the same bridge day after day, then the child has not learned to cross the bridge. If the parent carries the child at first, walks beside them next, and finally leads the child by walking ahead of them as an example, and then sees the child walk independently across the bridge, they can be sure that real learning has occurred as less and less effort, and eventually no effort at all is required of the parent as time goes on.

I was tempted at one point to carry my two-year-old through the task of eating his vegetables. I knew I wanted him to learn to eat them, and I knew that it would require much effort and diligence on my part in the beginning. So to avoid the unavoidable struggle that comes with teaching responsibility, I decided upon an “easy way out.”

“I don’t like my salad.”

“Okay, would you like to get down?”

“No, I want bread and butter.”

“I’m happy to serve you bread and butter when you’ve finished your salad and soup.”

“But I don’t like my salad.”

(here’s where the carrying comes in)

“Do you want me to help you eat it?”

“Yes.”

I proceeded to feed it to him even though he was totally capable at the time. He ate his salad and soup and was served his bread and butter, so I felt fine. I got the result I wanted: My two year old ate his vegetables. What I never stopped to ask myself was “Who did the feeding?” As you might guess, the welfare was well-received, and he consequently “needed” me to feed him his salad each day thereafter. After about a week of this, I began to notice myself feeling drained during mealtime, as I was not enjoying the peaceful conversations with my husband at the dinner table anymore. As I explored the source of this energy drain, I realized what my carrying had done and decided to undo it as quickly as possible.

“I don’t like my salad,” he began.

“Okay, would you like to get down?”

“No, I want some bread and butter.”

“I’m happy to serve you bread and butter after you finish your salad and soup.”

“Will you help me eat it?”

“No, I’ll let you eat it if you want to, but I’ll not help you eat it.” (nor will I fly fork airplanes of salad into his mouth).

As you might guess, he had a fit and was sent to his room. When he was invited back 5 minutes later, he taught himself how to eat salad—on his own, no controlling, bribing, or convincing necessary.

Can you see how deceiving the carrying method can be? It appeared as if I had taught my son to eat healthy. I could have likely checked that off of my list and moved on. The trouble is, it is difficult to move on when you have a leak in your energy reservoir. When our children learn something for real, we conserve all of our energy and can spend it on some other kinds of teaching. This is called progression. When we carry our children through their challenges, skipping the hard work and going only for the appearance of the end result we seek, we are left pouring energy into the same tasks day after day, at which point we must either remain stagnant in our progression as we are too drained to function optimally, or force ourselves to try to take on more when we haven't the energy to do so. Both of these options would sooner or later come crashing down upon us.

Some examples of carrying include

It's time to clean up: "Let's clean this playroom together. I'll do the dolly things and you clean the cars." \*note: There is nothing wrong with cleaning together for fun or for training, or for any other reason that you feel good about. But if you're cleaning together to avoid the failure in your teaching methods or the unavoidable struggle of teaching responsibility, and deep down you feel your child is capable of completing it on their own, it is carrying and it is bound to drain you and handicap the child.

It's time to take a drive and we want some peace and quiet in the car: "Let's put a movie on and each of you can choose a little snack." This of course is fine if you are choosing it for what it is. But it most certainly is not teaching the children to be peaceful and quiet in the car...although it takes on the appearance of teaching such.

It's time to finish up at a store and a child is bored. "Here, do you want Mommy to carry you?" There's nothing wrong with holding a child if that is what you feel best about doing in that moment. But if you would rather not, and wish you could teach them patience, peace and quiet, rest assured that it can be taught. But carrying them in order to get the appearance of patient, peaceful and quiet children will never teach it.

## 5 Steps to responsibility

Now let's explore 5 simple steps parents can take to help their children learn responsibility. I learned most of these basic steps from Jim Faye's and Foster Cline's "Love and Logic". I have adapted them to my own use as needed.

### Step 1. Teach with love

Every parent has an inherent way of teaching and explaining things to their children that is unique to them. Whatever your style, teach the child the task or the behavior in a loving way. If you are teaching a task or chore, you may want to walk through the chore step by step the first time, making sure that they understand exactly how it is done. If it is a behavior, such as not interrupting, you may want to

teach with examples from your own life or with precepts learned from scriptures or stories you have read together. It also could be just a quick teaching moment that includes only one line such as “We want our living room to be a quiet place where people can read or quietly visit, so will you please keep your toys in the play room or outside?” In order to communicate lovingly and to avoid words that suggest the intent to control, you may want to use phrases like “Will you please...” or “It sounds so nice when...” and “Would you be willing to...”

A wonderful result of teaching with love is that the child learns that your love for them is constant even when they have done something that was not right. They learn this because you speak to them kindly and the feeling from your voice, choice of words, and body language suggest to them that you love them, regardless of what they have done. As you pull them aside to teach them something that you would like them to change, it is such a perfect time for them to see that they can feel comfortable with their faults around you because you yourself are comfortable with their faults. You are asking them to change, but you are feeling happy amidst the confrontation and are not shaken up by the fact that they have done something wrong. The *behavior* may be unacceptable, but the feeling they get from the conversation is that *they* are totally and completely acceptable.

The most important thing to remember about teaching with love is the timing. The time for teaching with love is at the beginning. After you have already taught the child, and they disobey, we do not repeat step 1 and teach them again. This would suggest to the child that they were too dumb to understand or remember your teachings and that they need it repeated. What they actually need, now that they have disobeyed, is a consequence. This will teach them to obey your teachings. They do not forget our teachings, they only file them away to be used if they feel they need them. Ours is the task of giving them a reason to feel that they need them. They are incredibly bright and need only be given an instruction once. For example, how many times would I need to show the children a secret stash of chocolate before they would remember where it was located?

I once taught my children to tell me all about their aches and pains after their chores were done, but not during. Then I neglected to reinforce that teaching with a consequence each time they chose to disobey it. This wore on me for a while before I finally realized what was happening and began reinforcing the teaching. They felt so badly to receive a consequence for something they “didn’t know” and had “forgotten all about.” But sure enough, after the consequence came onto the scene, and they finally had a reason to use the teaching I had given them, remembering it was no trouble at all.

At one time I helped my daughter to develop a bad habit of talking back, by not providing a consequence for her. We had a pretty good relationship at the time and I was able to teach her all of the reasons why that would not serve her well in life. She listened and said she understood and would really try to work on it. Later I found myself teaching the same thing over and over, with no better results on her part. All that teaching, no matter how loving, was doing nothing. It was like a police

man requesting with more and more speed limit signs up and down the highways, that we slow down. The moment we pay our traffic ticket, all that teaching would then be of use to us. When I realized the rut I had fallen into, I began to reinforce the teaching by sending her to the playroom each time she began to talk back to me. Within weeks, a bad habit of many years was broken.

I think you will find that if you forget the timing of this step, and choose to continually teach when you should be giving consequences, your energy will be quickly drained and it will be quite difficult to feel loving inside as you teach. In fact, it may feel nearly impossible to be loving when a child is continually disobeying you. When we teach only once and reinforce the rest of the time, the love comes naturally because we never feel drained or abused ourselves. It is not difficult, nor does it require any patience on the part of the parent to be loving when we only give an instruction once, leaving the consequence to reinforce that one teaching moment.

#### Step 2: Plan on the child failing in order to learn.

When we plan on the child failing after we have taught them lovingly, we set ourselves up to be relaxed instead of stressed or worried as we administer the consequence. In order for the child to really learn the lesson we so lovingly taught them, they must receive a consequence from disobeying and have a little time to themselves to put it all together. Failing is then a necessary step. They must fail if they are to receive a consequence and thus learn. If failing is a necessary step to our children learning, why would we ever become frustrated, stressed out, or the least bit unkind when they make their mistakes? Perhaps it is because our methods do not work, our children are not learning what we set out to teach, and consequently, their mistakes do not turn into beautiful learning experiences for them, but rather more work and burden for us. Unfinished chores = messy house for us. Sloppy manners = degrading environment for us. Slow dawdling children = late arrival for us. Undisciplined and lazy children = feelings of failure on our part as the parents.

Once parents have mastered the art of administering effective consequences they will find the burden of their children's mistakes being lifted off of their shoulders and placed onto their children's shoulders. When this shift occurs, they will discover it is easy to relax when their child is doing something wrong. "Oh good," they can say, "here comes a great chance for my child to learn."

A parent who is planning on their child failing may start the day ready and waiting for learning experiences rather than hoping everything goes perfectly. A parent who is planning on children failing will make time for the failure and the attached consequence, instead of cutting everything so close in her schedule that she is irritated the moment the child misbehaves as it causes her lateness and failure in her own plans. For example, if I know that my 5 year old has not yet learned to get his shoes on, get into the car, and buckle his seat belt quickly the first time I ask him to, I must plan for the extra time required to teach him if I am ever to

remain calm amidst his failure. I may decide I need 10 or 15 minutes to get into the car instead of 5. If I fail to make time for teaching in my schedule, I am sure to feel stressed and frustrated when he dawdles and “makes me” late. If I go into the teaching moment from a frustrated place, I am in no place to communicate unconditional love, or even to think very clearly as I try to administer an effective consequence. If I am feeling irritated from the beginning, I have set myself up for failure as the teacher of these difficult life lessons.

An un-furrowed brow, a peaceful face, and a soft voice communicate to the child that they must be easy to handle, pleasant to raise, and just plain fun to be around...even when they make mistakes. Likewise, a furrowed brow and stern voice indicate to the child that they must be difficult, unlovable, and just plain annoying to be around. How must this child feel knowing that this is what their parents think of them? How difficult will it be for this child to improve when this is the image they have of themselves? And worst of all, this child may begin operating from the perspective of “If I can perform better, my parents will love me.” This perspective is entirely unhealthy as it causes the child to create a false self, an ego, who must do the work of covering up the real self at all cost. The ego will not allow the mistakes of the true self to ever be made known. It cannot. If it were to show its true self, complete with faults and imperfections, it would (in its opinion) be unlovable because love, it believes, is based on accomplishments, behavior, and performance. They falsely believe the more perfect the behavior, the more worthy of love they would be. The parent has never purposely communicated such nonsense to the child verbally. He doesn't need to. The parent's reactions day after day, year after year have spoken louder than any words ever could: “My fun-loving relationship with you will begin the moment you are perfect.” What child would not grow up desperately trying to fake perfection? Egotistical people also have a difficult time feeling compassionate toward others. This is because they have not yet established a compassionate feeling toward themselves. We cannot give what we do not have. They are constantly judgmental of themselves, because of their imperfections, since they know deep down from their conditioning, that if their imperfections would go away, their true self could be known and loved. Because of this constant judgment rather than compassionate feeling toward themselves, they must likewise view others through the same judgmental eyes.

The work of the ego is constant, demanding, and overbearing. Freely loving is what every heart yearns to be. The trouble is, so many know not how to freely love since they have never been freely loved. Following step 2: planning on the child failing, is the best way that I know to bring acceptance and love back into the relationship and to break the vicious cycle of judgment and frustration. In order to plan on the child failing and to be truly OK with their faults, we may have some healing of our own to do. We may need to show ourselves love and compassion by planning that we too may mess up. We too have faults and admitting instead of hiding them is the first step to correcting them. But we must admit them with love and acceptance rather than judgment and guilt on ourselves if we are ever to have enough love inside of us to share with our children.

### Step 3 Lovingly administer the consequence

The world we live in constantly provides us with consequences good and bad based on our actions. We learn from these consequences to change our behaviors, and through the process of time, become wiser in our actions. One may learn to pay their electric bill on time by experiencing the undesirable consequence of the electricity being turned off, should they miss a payment. We learn to remember our coats on outings by being stuck in the unexpected cold without one.

Our children do not fully experience this world complete with its many natural consequences as we do. They experience, instead, a sheltered version of this world, which we create for them in our homes. If they were to live in the same world as us with the same harsh consequences as we are left to, it could likely overwhelm or even kill them. Think of it. If I walk into the road when a car is coming, the consequence is injury or death. My child, on the other hand, has a mother watching over her at all times, waiting to teach her about this world. If she walks into the road at any time, I can teach her, without leaving her to experience the natural consequence, to stay away from the road. I can send her to her room each time she nears it. Soon, before she is even old enough to understand the danger, I can teach her this life-preserving truth. Even though the sheltered world in which our children live does not carry the same consequences as the real world, it is in our greatest interest in order to be successful parents to create an environment in our homes that is very much like the real world...only safer so that they can afford to make some mistakes and learn. Sometimes, our children's actions produce for *them* natural consequences such as those brought on by gravity and inertia like falling out of a swing or losing a ball down a hill. Yet sometimes their actions produce natural consequences that fall on *us*, like yelling (we must endure the noise) or slacking on chores (we must endure the mess). In these instances we can orchestrate our own not-so-natural consequences such as time-outs or early bed-times in order to teach them not to do those things. If the sheltered world that we create for them is an environment very much like the real world, then they will likely be prepared for success in it when they leave our home someday.

For example, if doing their jobs too slowly provides them with less free-time in the form of an early bedtime, then the child may, by the parents orchestrated consequences, learn the natural lesson that exists in the real world. Namely that people who get their work done sooner enjoy more free-time. They could leave our homes having this experience under their belts. But if the environment we create for them teaches false principles that do not exist in nature, they may be unprepared for that world when they enter it. We may teach through our lack of consequences that people who practice bad manners get to remain working and playing around those who are in charge of the environment (the parents). These children may grow up unprepared for the news that many who practice bad manners in the real world actually get sent away, perhaps fired, expelled, or sent to jail. It is hoped that through the experience of these consequences, the children will form good habits, so

that by the time they are old enough to desire right choices for more refined purposes (purposes deeper than just avoiding time-outs, etc.) they will at least have the good habits and self-discipline to make such choices.

Consequences are extremely effective teachers. From the simplest to the most complex, I have seen them work again and again. I have found that it does not matter as much what the consequence is, but rather how it is delivered. In my experience there are two essential factors that must be in place in order for a consequence to be effective. These are love and consistency.

When we deliver the consequence with love the child is left to focus on what they did wrong and how they can improve for a better outcome next time. When we deliver a consequence with even the slightest bit of frustration, the child is robbed of the opportunity to focus on changing, because they are too busy conquering a more important challenge—that of figuring out how to get their parents' love back. They may experience feelings of anger and resentment themselves because of how their parents are treating them. Or, they may buckle under their parent's authority and experience feelings of guilt and shame, all of which are unhealthy as they introduce the ego and shun the true self. Some children also experience the added thrill of noticing that they can control their parents' emotions like a puppet, causing them anger or happiness depending on their behavior. But if the parents simply deliver the consequence lovingly, all of this complicated emotional mess can be avoided and the children can simply learn to stop committing these certain errors, keeping their self esteem all the while.

How many parents want nothing more when their child is disobeying, to “go to their room and think about what they've done?” Yet how many children who get sent to their rooms are actually thinking about what they have done? Actually, they are probably thinking about anything *but* what they have done. They are most likely sulking and hurting inside, which contrary to what many believe, is not good motivation to change their behavior. When a child hurts under the shame and guilt-inflicting anger of their parents, they actually have a harder time changing their behavior due to the vicious rounds that the ego takes them on, which we discussed earlier. When a child is sent to their room from a loving, understanding parent, who feels bad for the child that they will experience sadness from the consequence, yet feels confidence in themselves that their consequence will work, the child can actually go to their time-out and there, lecture themselves into better behavior. This is because they truly want to not experience the interruption to their day that the consequence brings. This is simple and subtle, but if left to its simplicity, is enough to break even the worst habits. It is when we remove the love that we adulterate the beautiful teaching power that the consequence brings.

For a consequence to be effective, it must be consistent. I have seen the process of learning drag on for years when the consequence is inconsistently delivered. I have seen deliberate disobedience cease in literally minutes when the consequence is consistent. This may be quite time-consuming and require great diligence at first, but that will be counted a small sacrifice in the end when the

parent experiences the great joy of effectively teaching their child. Also, it will buy the parent much more time and relaxation than it ever cost them, once the child has learned because the child will be so much better behaved and pleasant to be around.

#### Step 4: Teaching Responsibility

In the process of teaching responsibility: Wipe the slate clean. This can be thought of as perfect forgiveness. The key is to forgive them right after delivering the consequence. This means no lectures, “You shouldn’t have done that, now you’ll have to go to your room.” This means no follow up conversations, “Now tell me what you learned while you were in there.” This also means no reminders, “Next time I want you to talk softly to your brother, even if he steals your toy.” This actually means that you call them out of their consequence with a smile and a hug if necessary, but nothing more. The minute you begin telling them what to think, and what they ought to have learned, you destroy the inherent teaching power of the consequence because you belittle their intelligence and you show them you have no confidence in their ability to assimilate information, analyze causes and effects, and essentially, learn from their own mistakes. In fact, they often do not want to learn a lesson if it is the one someone is trying to “make” them learn. They want to learn whatever they please. If the consequence is orchestrated properly, they are most likely learning exactly what it was you wanted them to learn. We do not want to ruin it right at the end by interfering.

Now that we have these four steps, let's run some every-day scenarios through them and see how they turn out. We will refer to the four steps below as we go along.

1. Lovingly Teach
2. Plan on failure
3. Lovingly Administer Consequence
4. Clean Slate

Example 1: Let's say I decide I want outside voices outside and soft gentle inside voices in the house.

Step 1: Lovingly Teach.

I may choose to sit down with my children and discuss the feeling in the home when it is quiet and peaceful versus the chaotic feeling that prevails when too much noise comes in. Or, I may simply say “Will everyone please speak softly inside the house?”

## Step 2: Plan on Failure

If I am planning on my child failing at this new rule in the beginning, I am in the attitude of, "Oh good, they're about to learn here any minute." This way I am feeling excited about the whole thing, rather than stressed when they mess up. Also, if I am planning on them failing, I will plan for the extra time it might take in the day to give them a consequence or two. I avoid packing my schedule too tightly when I have some important training to do. "OK", I say to myself, "They're probably going to walk in noisily, and I'm alright with that."

## Step 3: Lovingly Administer Consequence

The moment they break the rule I can say something like "Woops, will you please go outside?" (no fault-finding, no threatening)

## Step 4: Clean Slate

"You're welcome to come in if you'd like." (a few minutes after they've been sent outside).

Please note that if the children disobey this rule again, we do not start over with step one (lovingly teach). Step one is done only once. We would then skip step one and continue on with steps 2,3, and 4. For example, I would plan on failure, then after they fail I would again give the consequence, and wipe the slate clean. I can repeat steps 2-4 as many times as needed to reinforce that first initial teaching, but never repeat the teaching.

If you're wondering how to teach them to obediently go outside the first time the request is made, we will cover that a little later. For now, let's just assume that they go.

## Example 2:

Let's say a child is having a bit of a problem leaving messes behind wherever they go. The last thing I want to do is to let them know that they have a bit of a problem...they just might believe me! If they believe they have a problem, it will be much more difficult for them to improve and progress than if they believe that are a wonderful, capable, and perfectly normal child that simply needs to learn something new.

### Step 1:

Sweetheart, would you be willing to please clean up your piano books or any other supplies before you move on to other activities?

### Step 2:

Expect messes, stay calm, and get excited for what they are about to learn.

Now you find the piano books left out.

Step 3:

“Sweetie, will you please clean up these piano books and also go sweep the garage before you continue reading?”

Now she returns and reports on the garage sweeping (as you have previously taught her to do.)

Step 4:

“Thank you, that garage looks great.”

Again note that if we were to find more things left out, we would repeat steps 2-4, but not repeat the initial teaching/request.

Example 3:

Suppose we have taught our children not to hit, and then we see one elbowing another. We needn't think that they must be counseled against every wrong behavior before we deliver the consequence. If they have even been taught in general to be kind and gentle, we may deliver consequences for any act of unkindness without having to first stop and teach about it. So let's say I witness one child elbowing another.

Step 1: Skip it. They've already been taught.

Step 2: Plan on mistakes in general.

Step 3: “Uh-oh, please go into the play room.”

Do not worry that a play room might be too fun a time-out for the child to actually learn a lesson. You may send the child anywhere you feel good about, but a play room is quite effective as it provides them with something productive to do while they work out their problems and prepare to come back and try again. Also, the underlying message in the time out is not “You're bad, now go somewhere boring so you can suffer.” The underlying message in the time-out is “You're good, and you're welcome to be around me when you remember how good you are.” The consequence then is not to be in a boring place where they can suffer, but to be away from me or the activity they were trying to pursue before they got sent away. It is an interruption from what they were doing...like a traffic ticket. It gets in the way of what we were doing by taking up some of our time and money.

Step 4: Clean Slate, i.e. “You may come out if you'd like.”

Example 4:

You tell your 5-year-old that he is welcome to go outside when he is wearing his shoes. "But it's not cold outside," he argues. If you answer him at all, you are encouraging his arguing. If you answer him that it is still a little too cold for bare feet, then you are attempting to control something of his which ought to never be controlled by anyone except himself—his opinion. When this happens, the good feeling between the two of you vanishes and the child must either dig in or give in, neither of which are healthy. You can avoid both by following the 4 steps.

Step one: Skip it (you already asked him to wear shoes outside).

Step two: Skip it (he already failed)

Step three: "Please go in the playroom."

Step four: "You may come out if you'd like."

There are many different effective consequences and parents should choose the ones that work best for their family. I have found that giving a simple time-out using the above pattern works well for almost any misbehavior from bad manners to quarreling. There is one sort of behavior, however, for which I have found a time-out to be ineffective. This is when a child deliberately disobeys a direct order or request. For example, if a child is drawing at the table and begins to climb on the table, I can send him to time-out and he learns to remember my table rules because of the interruption he got in his coloring. However, if I give a child a direct order such as "Please come brush your teeth," and he chooses to deliberately disobey me by ignoring that request, a time-out would be ineffective because it would further delay his obeying the request. Can you imagine it?

"Please come brush your teeth."

The child keeps playing with his toys.

"Please go to the play room" (or bedroom, or wherever.)

"Great," he thinks to himself, "I didn't want to brush my teeth, and now I still don't have to."

Imagine any direct request, "Time to get in the car, time to go to bed, time to go home." All of these require some other kind of consequence than a time-out. In fact, the very act of sending a child to time-out ("please go to the playroom") is a direct request and presupposes that the child will actually go if it is to be an effective consequence. "Please go clean the garage," is also a direct request. In fact, the effectiveness of all the gentle consequences that I give hinge upon the children obeying the sound of my voice.

This brings us to Step 5, an extremely controversial topic... Spanking.

Step 5. Spanking: Proper and Improper Uses

Spanking has been proven time and time again by countless studies to yield undesirable side-effects, among which are sneakiness on the part of the child, severed relationship between parent and child, child learning to bully other children to get them to do what they want, not to mention the fact that the children usually do not even change their behavior when spankings become the consequence. Because of these reasons, in our culture spanking is often considered to be no less than child abuse. With this consideration, I agree, as long as it is referring to the improper use of spankings.

I would like to introduce to you the proper use of a spanking. When a spanking is used properly, none of the above negative side effects result. Let me explain why, when, and how a proper spanking is to be used.

### Why

For any consequence to be carried out and completed and thus be effective, the children must first know how to obey their parents with exactness. This establishes that the parents do have stewardship and authority to govern their children. It is to be used lovingly and wisely, but it is authority nonetheless. They must have this authority established in order to teach and train the children. The teaching and training can always remain gentle if there is something firm to back it up. The same phenomenon occurs in training horses to rein. When I was little, my siblings and I were rather firm on the reins with our horses. Because we were firm from the beginning, we always had to be firm or the horses would not respond. Years later, I met a man who had trained his horses to respond to the most gentle signals. Riding his horse was much less work than riding any of our own horses. With the slightest nudge of the heel on the horses right side, the horse would turn left (away from the pressure). With the slightest nudge on the left side, he would turn right. When I questioned him as to how he had trained his horse in this manner, he explained to me that from the beginning, he had given the horse the gentle nudge, and then used the firm reining only to back up the nudge if the horse did not respond to it. In this manner, the horse learned to respond to the nudge. The main reason we back our consequences with a spank is to avoid ever having to be firm, loud, or negative. We are now free to speak gently and the children respond to a gentle request the first time that it is given.

### When

When a child is given a direct order/request and they deliberately disobey or ignore it, they receive a spanking. They never receive a spanking for making a mistake. Children must make many mistakes in order to learn as they grow. When a spanking is given as a consequence for making a mistake, the children are not then free to make mistakes in front of their parents, and often they become sneaky. When a gentle consequence is given, the children still experience some disappointment, but they are not afraid to make mistakes. However, if they do not take the gentle consequence and fulfill or obey it, they cannot learn from it. The spanking then is never given as a consequence for making a mistake. But rather, a

spanking is given when direct orders/requests (including the gentle consequences) are not obeyed.

Some examples of direct orders/requests are:

“Will you please come inside?”

“Will you please buckle your seatbelt?”

“Please sit down.”

“Please don’t touch that.”

I have found that it is not ideal to be constantly giving direct orders/requests to children. They often feel controlled when too many are given. Giving choices is a much better way to handle most situations. For example, “Would you rather sit here or here?” feels nicer to the child than “Will you please sit right here.” Also, “Would you rather get your pajamas on first, or brush your teeth first?” feels nicer to a child than “Please go brush your teeth.” It is empowering to the child to feel that they are making their own decisions. For this reason, it is best to give choices and suggestions when possible. Sometimes a choice or suggestion is not sufficient. It is at these moments that a direct order or request is given. Sometimes it is time to jump in the car immediately. Or sometimes, there is only one place for a child to sit and it is time for them to sit immediately. Giving a direct order/request in these moments is necessary. However, it is essentially engaging in a power struggle. It is the parent saying “Do this,” and the child is then set up with an opportunity to choose between submission and rebellion. When these power struggles cannot be avoided, it is essential that the parent win the power struggle. This again establishes that the parent has stewardship and authority over the children. Yet again, this authority must be used wisely and never abused. So as a rule of thumb, avoid power struggles when possible, and if they must be had, win them.

I would like to here make the distinction between a child breaking a rule and a child deliberately disobeying a direct order/request. If we are using the four steps taught earlier to teach a child a certain rule, like “always be kind,” we mustn’t give the child a spanking for being unkind. Being unkind would earn the child a consequence. If they do not obey the direct order the consequence brings, such as “Please go to your room,” they would then be spanked. “Always be kind” or “always use your quiet voice in the house” or “never stand on the couches” are not direct orders. They are general rules to always be observed. A direct request is something we ask our children to do immediately in one certain moment. It is something that is to be obeyed in that moment only, such as “please stand up, please climb down from there, please put the pillow back on the sofa.”

How

When a child deliberately disobeys a direct order/request, I take them in private and give them one hard spanking on their bottom. I then hold them until they have finished crying. Then I take them back to the exact place they were when they deliberately disobeyed. There I repeat the request so that they have the opportunity to try again. If they obey me quickly and quietly, we go on as normal. If they again disobey, I take them again and spank them, hold them, bring them back to the place and again repeat the request. The spanking then, is not the consequence, but part of the cycle of the child learning to obey a direct request.

It is important that the spanking never be done in anger or even the slightest frustration. This would rob the spanking of its teaching power. The parents must remain calm and loving, even filled with sympathy toward the discomfort the child is about to experience. The spank also must be immediate, consistent, and felt. The child should never be injured in any way, but he must feel it enough to learn strict obedience.

Parents who teach obedience in this manner are not constantly spanking their children. The children quickly learn to obey the sound of their parents' voices. As I watch my children obey me, I do not sense that they are filled with anxiety each time I give an instruction, fearing that they might get a spanking. They have simply developed a habit of obedience, which the spanking helped to establish in the beginning. I do not believe they ever think about spankings. They have stopped thinking from a rebellious point of view. They are not perfect children. They make many mistakes as all children do, but deliberately disobeying is no longer one of them. Once children have established a habit of obedience, they can move on to other mistakes. These mistakes are a welcome part of development. Moving on to new mistakes is called progression.

If a child is too young to understand the request, "Please go your room," I take them there myself. Starting at about 9 months a child can learn not to touch certain things or not to do certain things by simply going through the 4 steps. For example, when my son was 9 months old, he would crawl up to the couch, pull himself up and touch my husband's laptop. My husband gently said, "uh-oh" and moved him over to another side of the living room (it could have been his crib, the playroom, or any other safe place in the house). My son crawled back and touched the laptop again. My husband repeated the time-out. This went on for about four or five rounds until finally my baby gave up and decided to leave it alone. Notice my husband did not tell him to go to his room, nor follow up with a spanking. As soon as the child is able to understand the request it is nice to teach them to go on their own simply because they learn it quickly and it saves the parents having to constantly carry them off to time-out.

When a child is eight years old instead of spanking them for deliberate disobedience I like to say "Uh-oh, I'll need to give you an extra job this afternoon during your free-time. Don't worry about it now. I'll have to think of what it will be later on, but for right now let's try this all again." Then I repeat the direct order/request (just like I do with the little children following their spanking). If

they obey we go on as usual. If they again disobey I give them another job. If a child has been trained to responsibly do their chores (more on chores later) this means an awful lot to them—it is worse than a spanking. They would probably rather a spanking because it does not dip into their free time. If I try this extra chore consequence with a little child instead of a spanking, they seem to not care as much because they are not responsible at completing their chores unsupervised anyway. They may get multiple extra jobs piled on top of them and still not obey. They are in “chore training” until about the age of eight, as I will explain later.

## eight. Chores

Teaching children how to obey requests is quite simple as there is only one request at a time given and the children either obey it or they do not. Teaching children to do chores is a bit more complicated since a chore consists of many correct actions done consistently, correctly, and in the proper order. When teaching children chores, I like to divide them up into two different categories: children younger than eight and children older than eight. Let’s start with the children younger than eight. We will call them little children.

If I send a little child to dry the dishes, they may initially obey my direct request. However, by the third dish, they are usually off somewhere in la-la-land and the fork has become an airplane that they are flying around the drying station. The same thing happens if I send a little child to clean the playroom. A child that has not learned to obey might outright rebel or never begin the chore. A child that has not been trained on the chore may feel overwhelmed and start to complain or cry. But, a child that has been taught to obey, and has been taught how to clean the playroom will often begin obediently, and then before one minute has passed they are just playing with the toys they were supposed to be cleaning. Because they were so willing to obey in the beginning, I do not call this disobedience. I call this getting distracted. When an older child (eight and up) gets distracted I give them a consequence and they quickly learn to be diligent workers. But when I give a little child a consequence for getting distracted, I find that they do not learn from it as the older children do. They continue getting distracted chore after chore, day after day. This is where training comes in. They must practice and eventually make a habit of staying on task when it is time to work. This practice could be achieved through many different methods. I will now share with you how I like to teach young children to stay on task.

When I first train a child to do a chore, I teach them how the chore is to be done and I do the chore with the child, requesting them to repeat each step as I show them. Once they learn the chore and get going, I must then train them to keep working on the chore until it is finished. I say “I want you to work beside me and

keep working until we finish folding this basket of washcloths. If you forget and begin to play, it is okay. I will just tap you on the shoulder and that means 'please come finish your work.'"

This tap on the shoulder then becomes a direct request and must be obeyed quickly as all direct requests. If the child does not immediately return to their work, they must be taken in private and given a spanking and brought back to try responding to the direct request again. In this way the child never gets punished for forgetting or becoming distracted. He only gets a gentle tap on the shoulder. He gets punished if he deliberately disobeys his mother's request. However gentle and harmless the tap is, it has proven to be sufficient to teach the most seemingly distracted children to stay on task until the chore is completed. They get conditioned to know that if mommy even looks at them she might be about to give a tap on the shoulder and they begin to check themselves before you have time to catch them lollygagging.

In order for this to happen, the mother must be very near the child so that she can catch him quickly each time he gets distracted. This is one reason why, in the beginning, I always work shoulder to shoulder with the child on the same chore. The other reason for working with them on the same chore is that little children often feel overwhelmed when they are asked to work on something alone that they cannot complete successfully on their own. Regardless of how easy the task may be, and how capable the child may be of completing it, and regardless of whether or not you have taught them how to do the chore correctly, children usually feel completely overwhelmed when given a chore that they have not been taught how to finish independently.

As soon as they have been trained on that specific chore and have learned to complete it with very few taps, the anxiety goes away. For example, my son who is 5 ½ has been trained on all of his early morning jobs to the point that he can run around the house and complete them without me in just a few minutes. He gets dressed, folds and puts away his pajamas, makes his bed and organizes the coat closet shoes, hats, scarves, etc. But when I ask him to please clean the playroom (which only has about 15 toys in it) he falls on the floor, buries his head in his hands and begins to cry. This is because I have not trained him on this chore. He is doing 10 times the amount of work each morning but it still feels overwhelming to him because it is a new task. I know that he is more than capable of cleaning up 15 toys, and the room is so small it would take about 30 seconds total. Yet the thought of it is still enough to bring him to tears because he has not been trained. I used to think that once a child had been trained to stay on task at one job, he would be fine staying on task at any other job too. But I have learned that this is usually the case for older children as long as they have been taught how to do the chore. Younger children on the other hand often need to go through the training process on each chore if they are to feel competent. They do know how to stay on task without being trained again, but in my experience they nearly always feel overwhelmed when

asked to complete a new chore alone that I have not trained them on. Once I train them, they feel fine.

Bear in mind that it is essential that the mother follow through and reinforce the shoulder tap quickly and consistently whenever it is not immediately obeyed. This is the key to success in the training process. One clue that you are not following through is a child getting many taps during one chore. This shows that the taps probably do not mean much to the child. When the taps are consistently reinforced the child usually gets some in the beginning, and then gradually less and less until they are soon able to complete the chore with very few taps.

When this happens, the child is then ready for the second phase, which is to work *near* their mother (instead of right *with* their mother). By working near their mother she is able to closely supervise them in case they need correction on their job or a tap on the shoulder, but they are gradually moving further from her the more independent they become at staying on task. Once they can complete their chores from this distance with few to no taps, they are ready to work independently from and even out of sight of their mother. I find this happens most often at the age of eight. I have seen it happen sooner on certain children with certain chores. But it usually takes place generally around age eight.

If this change does not occur by the age of eight, I move the child ahead into the next phase myself because I know that they are capable. I require my children eight and older to complete their chores independently and to return and report before a certain amount of time has passed. I have found that by leaving them to do it without my supervision, and giving a consequence later for those who do not comply, children over eight can quickly learn to work diligently and complete their chores correctly and on time.

I ask the children to do three things each time I give them a chore. The older children must complete them on their own and the younger children must finish them eventually with the help of taps if needed. They are:

1. Jump up and start when asked.
2. Return and report when finished
3. Finish before the allotted time

Any consequence could be used to help teach those who do not complete one of these steps, but my favorite for incomplete chores is to have the child go directly to bed just following dinner and dishes. This way they miss the family activity be it story time, singing songs, playing in the yard or whatever the family might be doing that evening.

The little children do not receive a consequence for incomplete chores because they are never left alone long enough to neglect them. They will receive a tap on the shoulder as they are being trained to stay on task and must not be left alone during the training process. Their consequence, remember, is a spanking if they do not quickly return to their work after the shoulder tap.

Nearly every time an older child has to miss a family activity for incomplete chores, they are twice as diligent the next day. Often they will wake up early the next morning and run through the house working quickly to complete each chore with exactness. They are usually extremely efficient for months after as well.

It is important to remember when teaching the little children to work that the shoulder tap is only effective when it is followed by the spanking if not obeyed. Be careful not to fall into the trap of giving tap after tap with no results. In my experience the spanking must be immediate and consistent to keep the gentle tap effective.

One time when I had a brand new baby and was spending most of my time caring for him, my five year old son was getting away with slow, sloppy, interrupted work. I was saying "tap tap" (in lieu of physically tapping) across the room and he was ever so slowly responding. He was getting about 20 taps for each job and working at a snail's pace. He had already been trained so well and I was hopeful that he would pick up the pace if I just repeated the tap. Unfortunately, he was getting slower and slower. I recommitted to following through with the spanking and in one day he was completing his jobs quickly as he used to.

Each time I teach an older child a new task, I begin the same as I would if they were four years old just learning to work for the first time, and I teach them by working *with* them. The next time they do that chore I work *near* them if they are ready, and then soon they are on their own. I used to think that if a child knew how to work independently they ought to be able to do new chores on their own. I soon learned though that even older children can become quite overwhelmed when they are given a new task. If they can just have their mother with them, and then near them, all the worry seems to go away.

## 9. Quarrelling

The four steps to teaching a child obedience taught earlier are fairly simple. When it comes to quarrelling however there are some added variables that seem to complicate the process. For example, whom do we send to time out, the bully, the victim, or both? Further, which one was the bully? Who started it? Do we leave the children to work it out on their own and thus learn some social skills or do we jump in and get involved to keep the peace in the home?

I have found a good rule of thumb when it comes to quarrelling to be: Only solve that part of the problem that is mine. For example, if I walk into a room and find two children quarrelling, without even knowing who did what, I can successfully solve my problem and keep the peace in the home without ever getting involved in their conflict and robbing them of the valuable learning opportunity the quarrel posed. To do this I need only define which part of the problem is mine and which part is theirs. Then I must solve my problem only and leave theirs alone so that they can learn some problem solving skills. Let me explain.

Generally when children are fighting the problem for the parent is the contention in the home, the noise, the bad feeling, etc. The problem for the children is anything from "She took my belt," to "He's using my special airplane." To solve my problem of noise and contention I can send each child to a separate time-out, one to their room and one to the backyard for example. Then when I call them out, I can leave them to solve their own problems of belts and airplanes simply by never getting involved with that part of it. When they come back from time-out, they still have the same conflict on their hands if I am careful to do nothing to get involved. They still have their hurt feelings, their toy is still stolen, and they still must decide whether to walk away, forgive and forget, talk it out, or go back to quarrelling.

If they choose to work it out nicely, they are free to remain in my presence. If they choose to start the fight back up, they are again sent away. They are then called out with a clean slate to try the whole thing again. Over the process of time the children learn to work their problems out nicely. They know that their parents will not solve their problems, but that they will also not tolerate any contention.

Facing our problems head on and solving them is in my opinion one of the hardest things someone could ever do in this life. Children and adults alike will often do anything to avoid solving their problems. If someone else will take responsibility, they will give it away almost every time. This can be seen in a classic scenario of tattling.

"Mom, she stole my bike. I was right in the middle of riding it and she came up and took it."

"I'm sorry dear. That must have really hurt your feelings." (Notice I'm staying out of the conflict.)

If the child is used to a parent who does not solve her problems, she will likely run away at this point and go fix it herself. But if this is a new situation for her, she will likely try again to get her mother to step in and punish the bully.

"Is that ok with you that she stole my bike? She didn't even ask."

"No, it is not ok, it is very sad, but I'm willing to let you handle it yourself."

"I can't handle it. She's bigger than me."

"I'm sorry. Would you like to go outside or stay in here and play by me?"

You see, try as she might, she cannot engage me in the conflict. But why will I not step in and give the bully a consequence? The reason I will not is that I can never know exactly what happened. I do not know what the victim did fifteen minutes ago to egg them on. I do not know if it really happened as she said it did. If I go punishing the bully and coddling the victim, the bully will hate the victim more for the punishment she caused her. And the victim will become more picked on and pitiful with time.

When my daughter was about three and my son was two, she was always bullying him. I was diligently sending her to time out each time I heard about it from him, or each time I walked in on it. It always seemed to be mostly her fault and so I was mostly just punishing her. To my dismay she became increasingly more hostile to him and seemed to have increasingly more anger built up inside. I noticed my son was losing any social skills he ever had up to that point, and was becoming ever more needy. The conflicts were getting worse and more frequent.

As I looked into it, I found that he was always quietly doing something to bug her, which I never saw. Then she would explode causing a scene, which I would see. I decided that the quarrel was really both of their faults. If either one of them, even the poor victim had at any time wanted to keep the peace, they could have been a peacemaker and avoided the fight altogether. I decided to start sending both of them to time out whenever I witnessed contention, and to do nothing but love them and listen to them whenever I heard about the contention through tattling.

I began asking the tattler questions to help guide them to problem solving rather than asking them questions to help me figure out who was at fault. Rather than asking things like "Did you have it first?" I began asking things like "What are you going to do now?" Or, "How did that make you feel?" Or, "Do you want me to talk to you about some ideas I have on how you could solve this?"

In the beginning they were so confused at the change of course and tried everything they could to engage me in the battle. Soon they learned they could not and they just quit trying. And since there was nothing else to do, they began learning some social skills. The tattler would come in and state his case, I would hug him, listen, and sympathize and then offer to discuss some options with him. He was then used to my ways and would usually run out the door yelling, "No thanks, I can do it myself."

To make a long story short their fighting decreased and has been ever decreasing since. Miraculously, my son who was so passive learned some needed skills and became stronger inside.

I would like to point out the difference between hearing the contention and hearing about the contention. As mentioned above, when I hear about the contention I do nothing but listen, love and sympathize. But when I hear the contention or see it, I immediately send both parties to separate time-outs. If I were to leave them there fighting in front of me I would essentially be saying "this is an appropriate behavior that I am allowing in my home." By immediately sending them away, they never get to practice that behavior around me. It is in this way that they learn where I draw the line, what I will put up with and what I will not.

When we first began with this process, we drew the line at hitting and kicking. If anyone was found doing either of those, they were sent away. Once we had that under control, we were able to see other more subtle contention that had been happening all along but that we were unable to see previously because of all of

the hitting. We noticed arguing and other forms of contention and began drawing the line at those. Soon our eyes were opened to an array of impolite manners that up to that point had been the norm. Over time through this simple process we have been able to now set a very high standard for manners in our home, instead of just putting out fires.

While we are on the subject of defining which part of the conflict is mine, I would like to point out that there are other times, besides quarrelling, where standing back and not getting involved in the problem solving is ideal. It is important during these times to offer love, listening, and sympathy, but never the work of solving the problem for the child. I take this approach whenever a child has any problem that has not caused a problem for me specifically. For example, if a child has chosen to go barefoot outside and then stepped on a sticker. I sympathize with them, help them with the wound if they would like, but refrain at all costs from telling them how they could have avoided it, why it happened in the first place, or what they ought to have done. It's not that I do not want to teach them these things. I do, eventually want to teach them everything that I know. But I find that timing is everything in these situations. I want to teach them when they want to hear it. If I attempt to teach them when they are not in the mood to hear it, I become Charlie Brown's mom "Waa-Wa-Waa-Wa," ever instructing and lecturing, never being heard.

I can find out if the child wants some direction or simply some compassion by asking, "Do you want me to teach you about the thorns in the backyard?" Or I can just hold them and listen to them cry and see if it comes up. If they are truly confused as to how the whole thing happened, usually they will ask. This is also a great way to model to the children the art of minding your own business and not becoming a know-it-all.

### Common Sense

In all of these parenting principles and application it is important to remember that a little common sense goes a long way. For example, if we are setting our children up for failure by taking them to the store when they are hungry or by neglecting to give them their naps we may find ourselves giving countless consequences with no better results.

### A word about reminding

Often parents attempt these methods and just when they are about to be effective teachers, they jump in with a reminder instead of a consequence. "You'll get a time-out if you don't do such and such," they will say. This not only distracts from the learning process, but it completely obliterates it altogether. In order for the child to learn, they must be left free to get themselves into a bind, and to suffer the consequences of their actions. As simple and effective as it is, it is often so difficult for parents who have been preconditioned to do otherwise to leave this process to its simplicity. The same applies with warning, threatening, and telling

kids what to do, before administering the consequence. These actions rob the consequence of its teaching power and also show to the child the parents' intent to control them.

## Conclusion

As children go through the process of learning obedience and manners I find that the older they get, the more they begin to care about right and wrong for deeper reasons than avoiding consequences...especially if their relationship with their parents is a good one. As long as a child has learned basic obedience, self-discipline, and has a good relationship with their parents, it is often enough to just sit down with them and explain to them a certain situation and the inconvenience they have caused and simply ask them to please not do that again. This constitutes step one (Lovingly Teach) in the 4 step process. They care deeply about this once they have developed to a certain point, and often a consequence is not necessary because they are so open to learning and obeying. It is exciting to watch this process. It seems to me that it happens with age, but contingent upon the children having previously learned obedience and self-discipline. If they have not mastered these, it may not matter how old they are. Likewise, if the relationship is not an open and loving one, they may not be able to truly care deeply about anything since one of their basic needs is not being met. Bear in mind that as pivotal as it is in establishing a loving relationship, it is not the same thing as teaching obedience and self discipline. Both ends of the pendulum must be mastered as each enhances the other.

The beauty of this kind of parenting is not merely that the children learn to behave, but they truly gain the self-discipline necessary to experience real joy in this life. It is difficult for children to experience joy who possess an entitlement mentality. It is difficult for children to experience joy who are accustomed to passing the blame and never quite feeling totally responsible for their own behavior leading to a satisfying happiness. They are too conditioned to looking for whose caused their suffering. These parenting principles equip children with the necessary skills for governing their own lives because they leave the child to learn how to think through their own problem (no one will come to his rescue and do the thinking for him) and then to freely act on his own will (no one will tell him what he must do). The ability to self-govern is key to a free society. The less we are able to govern ourselves personally, the more laws we need publicly. The greater responsibility we take in the home to instill these principles within our children, the less responsibility our government will have to take for their actions.

As we embark upon the marvelous privilege of parenting, let us remember the path of the shepherd. He leads his flock in the direction he knows will bring them joy, peace, and safety by walking in that direction himself. And although he never forces them to follow, he also does not allow them to lead. If he were to prematurely thrust them ahead of the flock, bestowing upon them too much authority too soon, they may never know which way he might have lead them. Our

children, the future statesmen and women, will know how to lead if they have been following true leaders in their homes.