



The negotiator

We love our children so much that we will try everything to avoid correcting bad behaviour where there is the potential for conflict. We try and try again to get the results we want with reasoning, explanations of why we're right, promises of reward and indications of the consequences of what will happen if the little one doesn't do as we want - for example, 'you'll catch a cold if you don't wear your coat' or 'your feet will get wet if you don't wear your wellies.' The pleadings end up in a frenetic situation of 'I'm not going to' and 'you will' with flared tempers and frustration or simply compromise.



Ask yourself where it has gone wrong, that this little 'two bricks high' girl or boy is telling you what they are or are not going to do. Is it about you or is it about them? Do you feel a failure as your aspirations of being the best parent ended in fiasco? What do you feel guilty about? Are you not there enough, are you too impatient, too critical, too idealistic? What about this little person - are they strong-willed, stubborn, bossy, do they mix with children who they copy at nursery, pre-school, school, in the neighbourhood or copy the behaviour of siblings? Are they affected by discord or negative dynamics within family relationships?

It is our responsibility to sort out any of these possible issues if they are producing a lack of respect within ourselves or our children. Parents need to work together; our expectation of ourselves and the family unit needs to be realistic and communication must be good for understanding, forgiveness and acceptance to take place.

Remember that, when you ask your child to do something, it isn't an invitation to negotiate but rather an opportunity for him or her to learn the value of accepting authority.

If noise and chaos tend to escalate, it's better to remove the offender to somewhere where they can cool off and then give explanations after the incident has been sorted out.

The most effective and constructive preparation for our children to handle life with respect and dignity is to give a good example. It's better to persevere in your own quest of managing yourself with a cool, calm and humble attitude rather than allowing frustrations to bring out the worst in yourself and your children.

Merle Sparkes