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Sent: Friday, July 19, 2013 8:54 AM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: News from Matching Assistance-Parenting a Hard to Handle Child

Matching Assistance Program Newsletter

October 2012

Hard-to-Handle Child

Wanted:

Mature adults for 24-hour, seven-days-a-week duty. Must be patient, determined, and self-motivated. Will need to work with people who are at times totally dependent, demanding, and unreasonable. Lifetime commitment. No job training provided. No monetary compensation, but generous fringe benefits.

Parenting is, under the best of circumstances, tough. And if you have a hard-to-handle child, while most parents are enjoying the fringe benefits of their kids, some parents find the smiles, hugs, and quiet bedtime stories--overpowered by scowls, stomping and loud objections.



What will Help Us?

Few techniques work for every child--or every parent. So, how do you decide which approach works best? Bottom line you need to experiment and try different approaches to determine what will help.

Clinical child psychologist Dr. C. Drew Edwards in his book *How to Handle a Hard-to-Handle Kid* gives us five steps to choosing appropriate feedback for your Hard-to-Handle kid.

1. **Try to determine what might be causing the problem behavior** - A child who lies may fear strong consequences for doing something inappropriate. A child who steals may not be receiving enough positive emotional support and may settle for material things instead. If you know why a child does something, you're more likely to discover an appropriate way of responding.
2. **Choose forms of feedback you can follow consistently** - Your comfort with a technique will depend on your personality, your experiences, and your values about how to raise children. It's important to feel comfortable with the approaches you try, since you probably won't use them effectively if you don't.
3. **Give a technique time to work** - Too often, we respond to our hard-to-handle child with an appropriate feedback technique but give up if we don't see immediate progress. Use an approach for at least **two weeks** before evaluating whether or not it's helping.
4. **Choose techniques that fit your child's personality and developmental level** - Time out, for example, is appropriate for young children. Teaching self-control is less useful at age 6 or 7 than at 10 or 12. Logical consequences make more sense to an older child than to a preschooler. See more on development below.
5. **Consider the circumstances surrounding the problem behavior** - If you're visiting friends, for example, you might not find an appropriate space for a time out. Removing a privilege when you get home may be more effective, especially when you tell your child then and there what you plan to do.

[Learn about Child Development](#)

[Warning Signs](#)

Many problems between child and parent evaporate when parents educate themselves about child development. This allows you to know what is appropriate for an age as well as how a child thinks at that stage in their lives. Knowing where they are developmentally can help you relate and communicate appropriately and hopefully more effectively. Healthychildren.com has a complete list of ages and stages for you to research where a child is developmentally.

Become an Authoritative Parent

- **Permissive Parents** are responsive but not at all demanding.
- **Authoritative Parents** are equally responsive and demanding.
- **Autocratic Parents** are demanding but not very responsive.
- **Unengaged Parents** are neither demanding nor responsive.

Authoritative parents balance emotional nurturance and support with structure and direction in raising their children. There are multiple quizzes and questionnaires on the web that can tell you which type of parent you are. They will ask difficult questions, but an accurate portrayal will truly help you begin to help your hard-to-handle child.

Not Alone...

You are not alone in having a hard-to-handle child; other parents are going through the same thing. Do not go through this process in isolation; don't be afraid to ask for help. And please don't wait until the situation is critical before reaching out.

Persistently seek help through books, family health professionals, and support from other parents. Any combination of these efforts can find you the support you need to meet the challenges of raising a hard-to-handle child.

If your child shows several of these signs regularly, seek professional help. They may indicate a serious conduct disorder.

- Bullying and threatening others
- Cruelty to animals
- Stealing
- Chronic lying
- Frequent aggression
- Cruelty to people
- Destructiveness
- Setting fires

Conduct disorder can also be an early sign of depression or bipolar disorder.

Books for Children

The Berenstain Bears and the Truth by Stan Berenstain and Jan Berenstain (New York: Random House, 1983)

The Complete Tales by Beatrix Potter (London: Penguin Group, 1989).

The Jester Has Lost His Jingle by David Slatzman (Palo Verdes Estates, CA: The Jester Company, 1995)

Love You Forever by Robert Munsch (Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1986).

Ramona the Brave by Beverly Cleary (New York: Avon Books, 1985).

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams (New York: Random House, 1985).

C. Drew Edwards, Ph.D. (1999). *How to Handle a Hard-to-Handle Kid A Parents' Guide to Understanding and Changing Problem Behaviors*. Free Spirit Publishing.

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