

solutions

CLOSING THE GENERATION GAP

For generations, parents have struggled to find the “right” way to raise their children. The older generations believed in the absolute sanctity of parental authority. Children lived according to their parents’ strict schedules, rules and expectations. When Dr. Spock’s book *Baby and Child Care* was published in 1946, its simple message was revolutionary: “Don’t be afraid to trust your own common sense.” Between that and his insistence that parents should show love and affection to their children rather than constant strict discipline, Dr. Spock challenged the conventional wisdom of early 20th-century childrearing like no one else.

Subsequent generations continue to vow that they will not make the same mistakes as their parents, but in their rejection of the parenting methods of the past, modern parents are reluctant to exercise **any** authority at all. As a result, there has been a shift of power in the family. Now, children are often the ones setting the schedules, the rules, and the expectations for the household. In his book, *Take Back Your Kids: How to Teach and Get Respect*, William Doherty, Ph.D., urges parents to be the leaders in restoring mutual respect, kindness, tolerance and balance in parent-child relationships. Dr. Doherty and other contemporary experts have offered the following tips to guide you on the journey to create a family environment of mutual respect:

1. Remember, your child is not your friend. Your job is to be the parent, teacher, coach and limit setter.
2. Respect your children – permit them to express their own opinions, tastes and values. Be sure to give them your undivided attention: make eye contact, put down your phone, look up from the computer and be ready to listen.
3. Explain that the family policy on respect is one of zero tolerance for disrespect.

4. Create a list of house rules. Make sure your children understand the rules and be prepared to repeat them regularly.
5. Be on the same page as your spouse/partner; agree to follow the same rules.
6. Be clear about what will happen if the rules are broken and follow through with the consequences when necessary. Use time-outs if disrespectful behavior persists.
7. When you see or hear your children using respectful language and making respectful choices, recognize it and praise them for their behavior.
8. Nip disrespectful behavior in the bud and address the causes when the moment passes. Consider these issues to get the roots of the problem:
 - a. Children may not even realize their behavior is disrespectful - talk about what happened and how it could have been dealt with differently.
 - b. Some children have difficulty asserting or expressing themselves appropriately when feeling angry or frustrated.
 - c. Some kids have difficulty managing the stress and emotions they experience when faced with a limit or being told “no,” and just can’t keep themselves from crossing the line.
9. Give your children alternative problem-solving skills. Explain that ultimately, it’s their responsibility to manage their own emotions and behavior by using the tools you provide them.
10. Be firm, but practice what you preach. Do not scream, belittle, or argue with your child.

Resources:

www.nimh.nih.gov
www.empoweringparents.com
www.psychologytoday.com

PARENTS MATTER: *In building a loving bond within your family, mutual respect is critical.* – Charlotte Resnick, Ph.D.