

Parenting Your Child Effectively: Work With, Not Against, Your Child

By Marilyn Fox, Extension Educator

Sometimes we need something right now to help us calm an emotional discussion with our children. When things are difficult, we are most likely to “lose our cool” and say or do things that we wish later we hadn’t. We need something that settles the conflict without either the child or the parent feeling put down. There are a number of guidance principles that help us discipline in stressful times.

Guidance Principle

Work with children instead of against them. When old furniture is refinished, we are told to always rub with the grain of the wood. Perhaps we should also work “with the grain of the child!” Stand back and watch children. Then decide the best way for them to do what they are trying to do. This can sometimes turn a conflict into a pleasant (or at least acceptable) experience.

Behavior	Environmental Change
Five-year-old Jose wants to help his mom fix dinner. He doesn’t want to watch television or ride his tricycle.	Decide what jobs Jose can do. Then find a safe place for him in the kitchen and let him help.
Thirteen-month-old Kim Son turns her head away when offered food on a spoon. If the food is put on her tray, however, she digs in with both hands and happily eats.	Put newspaper on the floor, find a big bib, and stand by with sponges.
Eight-year-old Michael announces he only likes three foods: hamburgers, french fries and ice cream.	
Jenny and Kristy want to play with play dough.	

Acknowledgment

This fact sheet contains guidelines to help parents interact with their children. It was reformatted from NebGuide G1991 (Revised May 1997) written by Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Life Specialist.

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