

Gifts We Can Give Our Children: The Gift of Thinking

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By sharing the thinking with our children, we provide them the opportunity to grapple with the consequences of their choices. When our child misbehaves or makes mistakes, we can hand the problem back to her by asking, "How are you going to solve this?" Giving a child some guidance and allowing him to struggle to find a solution builds responsibility and self-esteem. For the child, having the satisfaction of saying, "I did it!" is key.

Thinking is just like any other skill -- it takes practice. The key is asking lots of questions instead of telling your child what to do. Questions cause children to think, commands cause them to resist. Wise parents choose thinking over resistance any day.

The five-step process from Love and Logic Parenting listed below clearly hands the problem back to the child and gives the message that he is capable. With this tool, parents can look forward to the poor choices of their children as learning opportunities. After all, the road to responsibility and wisdom is paved with many "affordable" mistakes!

Guiding Children to Solve Their Own Problems -- Love and Logic Parenting www.loveandlogic.com/

Step One: Empathy.

"How sad."

"I bet that hurts."

Step Two: Send the "Power Message."

"What do you think you're going to do?"

Step Three: Offer choices.

"Would you like to hear what other kids have tried?" At this point, offer a variety of choices that range from bad to good. It's usually best to start out with the poor choices. Each time a choice is offered, go on to step four, forcing the child to state the consequence in his/her own words. This means that you will be going back and forth between Love and Logic steps three and four.

Step Four: Have the child state the consequences.

"And how will that work?"

Step Five: Give permission for the child to solve the problem or not.

"Good luck. I hope it works out." Have no fear. If the child is fortunate enough to make a poor choice, he/she may have a double learning lesson.