

The Power of Connection

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Have you ever disappointed someone you love dearly, someone who believed in you? If you are like most people, that feeling can be crushing. The closer we feel to another person, the more divested we feel when we do something that they disapprove of. When relationships are damaged, even the best techniques can fail.

As parents, we need to realize that loving relationships give consequences their power. Consequences are opportunities for our children to learn from mistakes if we remember to keep our relationships intact by putting empathy first.

Parents who get pulled into endless arguments

rarely have the time or energy to enjoy loving relationships with their kids.

I think we can all agree that arguing with our children is not a good thing. Fighting, arguing, and lecturing causes us to move from the frontal cortex part of our brain where thinking, reasoning and impulse-control happen to the brain stem which is responsible for basic survival and the "fight-or-flight" response.

Empathy allows children to learn from their mistakes. Anger short circuits learning. Sarcastic empathy backfires every time, sincere empathy works wonders. It allows the parent to remain the "good guy" and the poor choice to be the "bad guy." Empathy prevents fight-or-flight and maintains lifelong loving relationships!

One tip that I love to teach parents to avoid arguing and keep the relationship connection comes from Love and Logic Parenting. It is a two-step process:

- Step One: Go "Brain Dead" The less we say, the more effective we become. Lectures never worked for any parent in all of history.
- Step Two: Calmly repeat a one-liner One-liners need to be spoken with genuine empathy, no sarcasm. They keep words from squirting out of our mouth. Using them helps us remain calm regardless of what our kids say. Kids argue with us to get attention, hoping that with enough arguing, we will give in. By remaining calm, we starve them of argument fuel. One-liners can include: "I know," "What a bummer," "Probably so," "Thanks for sharing," and more.

Each moment of unconditional acceptance creates a living thread between us and our children, and these threads weave a powerful bond that fills them with a genuine and lasting happiness. When we unconditionally care about our children's happiness, they feel a powerful connection to us. They feel whole, safe and included in our lives.