

Parenting Today's Children

Some might say that family troubles today were as widespread in prior generations. This may be true to a degree today; however, whether it's true or not, today's parents' are finding themselves at a loss when their child is in crisis mode. Without the proper tools on the parent's tool belt for the job, it's not uncommon for the child to become the aggressor and the parents' actions or reactions escalating the situation.

In my generation, if mom or dad told us kids to do something, we did it right away because we knew we'd be yelled at, threatened, spanked, or grounded. We quickly learned not to mumble something under our breaths or backtalk to our parents for the sake of having our hair pulled backwards to bring our head at just the right angle to be slapped in the face. This was what discipline looked like in my home, as well as my friends' homes.

Additionally, my sisters and I weren't praised or acknowledged when making good choices in our lives. Instead, we captured our parents' attention whenever we did something wrong. We lived in a home where children were seen, but had no voice. We didn't have rights, and hands-on discipline was the norm. *No longer are the days when a parent tells a child to jump, and they jump right away in fear of being physically or verbally abused.* Our parents controlled us kids through negative interactions. Today, we call that parenting style abuse.

Today's children have a voice and yes, they have rights and they know it! But with this freedom comes responsibilities that many of our youth aren't mature enough, or equipped, to recognize the evil that lurks just around the corner in hopes of capturing and preying upon their innocence, which they then find themselves operating in crisis mode. Additionally, so many of today's children have either a mental health or intellectual developmental delayed diagnosis that involves out-of-control emotions. With so many outlets that can lead our youth astray, parents' are finding themselves unequipped when their child falls down; therefore, parents resort to the abusive parenting style of prior generations in an effort to control their child.

There is hope for parents' that recognize their shortfall and wanting to learn new skills and willing to be trained in parenting methods that fosters and promotes healthy behaviors and relationships for our youth. But first, let me share with you a personal story.

I found myself in a parenting predicament over 13 years ago. I remember standing in the hallway of my home when my 3-year old son refused to do a simple command. I'd lightly



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spank his little bottom and again repeated the task. It was the look in his eyes and a voice inside telling me he doesn't understand what's happening. Being proactive and wanting to be a good parent, I signed my husband and I up for a parenting class called, "Parenting with Love and Logic," by Foster W. Cline. We started applying this parenting style right away. We did walk away with some really great tips, but we weren't getting the results we had hoped for. But, I didn't give up. I continued researching to add more tools to my toolbox and later came to the conclusion that I needed multiple tools for that tool belt of mine.

My son was about 4 years old when he was diagnosed with high functioning autism, ADHD, and sensory processing disorders. By this time I found myself at a total loss in how to parent this child. His

aggressive behaviors were from his body being over-stimulated in his environment.

With all seven of his senses being affected, he was constantly on sensory overload. So how in the world am I to parent a child that didn't understand the world around him and whose negative behaviors were a reaction to the stimuli around him?

As the years went by, I continued researching and tried everything for my son's quality of life to be better, including praying for a miracle, special needs diets, supplements, etc. However, he continued to grow and his physical behaviors continued causing harm to himself and others. My life was in crisis daily. It wasn't until he was 14-years old that he was accepted into TEXANA in Richmond, Texas, where they take youth on the autistic spectrum with the worst-of-the-worst behaviors and provide around-the-clock ABA therapy. For my son to remain at TEXANA, it was mandatory that his dad and I attend parenting classes sponsored by the ABA behavior therapists at TEXANA. Each month we attended class, our tool belts became larger and we were able to immediately apply these new skills to our son during his monthly furlough home.

I wish I had this knowledge on my tool belt when my son was much younger because it works! He's been home for 4 months now and has had zero physical outbursts towards himself or others.



Now my husband and I have been providing respite to families whose children are in crisis since October 2015. To become crisis respite providers, we had to become certified in emergency behavior constraint, take a mental health first aid class, and a class to recognize suicidal symptoms and

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prevention. There were also some other classes; however, none of the required training included the daily interactions of parenting children.

At times, some of the youth we cared for refused to follow directions or complete a requested task. So now what?

It's not like we could make a child do as he was told. And if one child got away with not completing a task, then it's like a domino effect with the other kids refusing to complete tasks. Our hands were tied and the kids knew it. Then thanks to our parenting classes at TEXANA, we began using our new parenting tool on the children in our care. And what a difference it made! This parenting style had a positive effect on the children regardless of their diagnosis.

So what is this parenting style I'm talking about?

It's "The Power of Positive Parenting," by Dr. Glenn Latham. In this parenting style, we catch our children doing good and immediately praise them. If they're given a task, we ignore them until it's done. No longer do children capture our attention when they're displaying negative behaviors (unless they're doing harm to self or others and/or destroying property). Our children have a voice, and we as parents or caregivers want to hear what they have to say, but only when they're calm and being respectful to us.

No longer are the days that a child should live in fear of being verbally or

physically abused. Instead, let's build them up, encourage them, and teach them by modeling these positive behaviors we want to see in them. Then, and only then, can we conquer abuse for generations to come.

If you're ready to learn some parenting skills to add to your tool belt, please email me so we can add you to our Parent Training Webinars' distribution list at:

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