



Building Parent-Child Mutual Respect

By Judy Arnall

In parenting classes, Mutual Respect is the cornerstone of parenting theories and philosophies. However, many people do not realize what it means. Mutual respect between parent and child is basically about the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have done unto you. So don't do anything to your children that you wouldn't want done to yourself. Many parents object. Since when do we start treating children as grown-ups? Don't we know better than they? They are children and we are the parents and yes, we should treat them differently. Well, yes and no. Let me illustrate this in terms of an employer/employee relationship.

Children are not equal to parents in some ways. We parents have lived on this earth 20 – 40 years longer than our children and have much more experience, knowledge, and life lessons, than the children do. Just as the boss is the boss because she has more experience and probably more educational attainments than we do. She has had more lessons learned and advice to give. Therefore, children are not mini-adults just as you are not the boss!

Children are equal to parents in some ways. Their feelings, dignity and sense of self worth are equally as important to them as other adults. Lets look back at the workplace example. Just because the boss has more knowledge and experience, doesn't mean that she can call you names, berate you in front of the client, or hit you for not getting your work out on time, nor can she wash your mouth out with soap if you swear on the job. Your feelings, dignity, and sense of self worth as an employee are equally as valuable as hers and must be mutually respected. Therefore, children have the right to feel all their feelings, to have their body's dignity respected, and are entitled to expect to be treated worthily.

What age do children deserve to be treated with mutual respect? Mutual respect begins at birth. How many parents leave their babies crying for hours and wouldn't even think about leaving a stranger crying in a store. How many parents send their upset toddlers to time-out, yet wouldn't tell a friend on the phone, "Go to your room for 45 minutes (one minute per year of age) and don't call me back until you've calmed down!" If we punished our friends for being late, how long would we be friends? If we punished our spouse for denting the car, how would that affect our marriage? If we punished our employee for a badly written report, would they work unpaid overtime to help you out? Perhaps we need to think of the ways we treat our children versus how we treat our employees, partner, friends and strangers. Mutual respect is not limited to adults only. Model the behaviour you want to see. If you want to be treated with respect, be respectful.

Judy Arnall, BA, DTM, CCFE is a professional certified parenting and teacher conference speaker, and trainer, mom of five children, and author of the world-wide best-selling print book, ***Discipline Without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery***. Judy has also produced the DVD, ***Plugged-In Parenting: Connecting with the digital generation for health, safety and love***, and her latest new book, ***Parenting With Patience: Turn frustration into connection with 3 easy steps***. Stay tuned for the upcoming book, ***From Unschooling to University***, to be published Spring 2016. www.professionalparenting.ca, jarnall@shaw.ca, 403-714-6766 Sign up for notifications of free monthly parenting webinars. Copyright permission granted for “reproduction without permission” of this article in whole or part, if the above credit is included in its entirety.

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