


PARENTING TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES

LOVE
&
LOGIC+



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the GREAT relationship you've always wanted

MARRIAGE TRANSFORMATION | PARENT TRAINING | SELF-MASTERY

Intro

- About the Author

The Workshop

1. Intro to Parenting in the Trenches
2. Parenting with Love and Logic
3. The Misbehavior Cycle
4. Three Types of Parents
5. Discipline v. Punishment
6. Power Struggles
7. Problem Ownership
8. Giving Choices
9. Enforceable Statements
10. "Snap 1-2-3"
11. Q & A

Next Steps

- The Relationship Mastery Seminar Series
- Resources & FREEbies

• • • ► **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** ◀ • • •

Jonathan D. Sherman, MS, LMFT is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and Relationship Strategist specializing in “creating greatness in relationships.” He is the president of Jonathan Sherman, International and MarriageEnvy.com.

His three main areas of focus are Marriage Transformation, Parent Training and Self-Mastery. He assists people in learning how to improve their marriages, their parenting and themselves through skill development, life coaching, overcoming depression and anxiety, stress and anger management, and addiction recovery. He speaks and teaches extensively on a wide range of relationship topics in both the community and professional sectors.

Jonathan was previously the Director of Training and Development for PeopleSmarts—a leadership development firm specializing in the field of emotional intelligence and continues as a master consultant for Five Degrees Consulting where he provides training and executive coaching. Further, he was the Youth Substance Abuse Coordinator for Valley Mental Health in Summit County, UT and an instructor for the State of Utah’s Shared Parenting Course for Divorcing Parents. His background includes residential addiction treatment, domestic violence perpetrator and victim treatment, at-risk youth services, and home-based family therapy services.

He has written over a hundred articles for his Great Relationships newspaper column and has developed numerous products for professionals and lay people alike. He was awarded the Outstanding Education Award by The Utah Behavioral Healthcare Network for “recognition of outstanding efforts in presenting the public with accurate, meaningful and current information about mental illness.”

He works closely with civic and community leaders in crafting solutions to strengthen marriages and families in the community through providing consulting on best outreach practices. Further, he founded

The Relationship Wellness Series of workshops which are designed to strengthen families and enrich our community.

He has worked with school districts and educators in creating effective solutions to difficult behavioral and emotional problems with their students. He has developed the Be the Answer: Solutions to Bullying™ prevention and intervention program modeled on evidence- and researched-based solutions. He conducts teacher training and school assemblies on this and other topics.

Jonathan is a sought-after speaker for professional, school, community, and faith-based organizations. He speaks on creating great relationships by addressing issues of mental health, addiction, marriage, parenting, divorce, step-families, stress management and others. His presentations are informative (research- and evidence-based made practical), upbeat and fun. A sampling of his presentations can be viewed at MarriageEnvy.com/Seminars. Comments from his various speaking engagements may be viewed at MarriageEnvy.com/about/testimonialsfan-mail

Educationally, Jonathan did his undergraduate work in Family Sciences at Brigham Young University and his master’s work in Marriage and Family Therapy at Northern Illinois University. You may view his full vita at MarriageEnvy.com/about

He is married to a lovely and skilled husband trainer who has truly earned her keep. They live in eternal bliss (okay, fairly peaceably) with their four children in the Rocky Mountains of Utah.

Jonathan has been passionately educating individuals, couples, families and groups about building strong families and creating great relationships since 1993.

PARENTING QUESTIONS

What I love most about parenting is...


What I dislike most about parenting is...

My most challenging child is challenging because...

I need some specific help with...

I'm already good at...

Let's talk about me. I need...



Toddler's Creed

If I want it, it's mine.
If I give it to you and change my mind later,
it's mine.
If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
If it's mine, it will never belong to anybody
else, no matter what.
If we are building something together, all the
pieces are mine.
If it looks just like mine, it is mine.


Source: Unknown



Love allows children to grow
through their mistakes.


Logic allows children to learn
from the consequences of
their choices.

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Let a child have the
opportunity to practice
good decision-making
skills by giving them
choices.
"Responsibility is
caught
not taught."

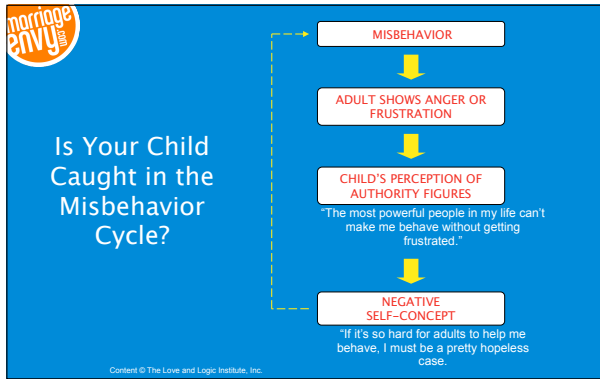
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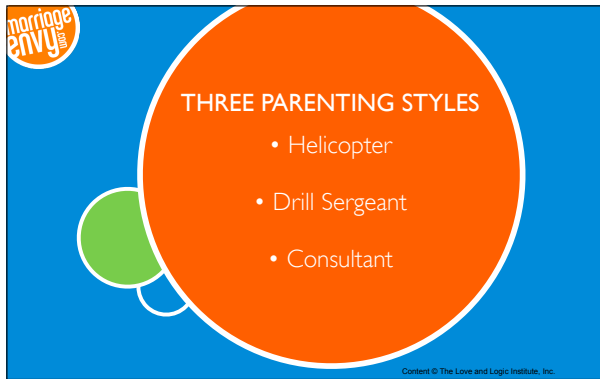


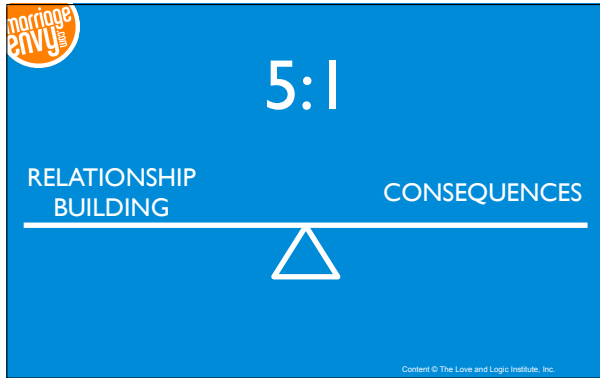
**Love and
Logic House
Rules**

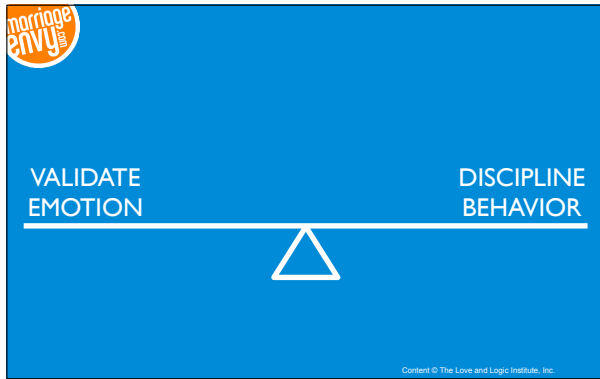
- Treat your parents with the same respect with which they treat you.
- Everybody in the house does his or her fair share of the work.
- Be prepared to solve any problems you make for others. The family understanding is that kids can solve the problem in almost any way, provided the solution does not make a problem for anyone else on the planet.
- Be prepared, at 18 years of age, to continue your education or to be totally self-supporting.


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Avoid
Power Struggles
 with easy-to-use Love and Logic technique!
 Remember Love and Logic is built on three simple ideas:

1. Give choices within limits.
2. Set limits through enforceable statements.
3. Apply consequences without anger.

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Logical Consequences
 should be designed in such a way that children feel more in control of their lives as a result of their experience.

How to destroy the teaching value of a logical consequence:

- Say, "This will teach you a good lesson."
 - Display anger or disgust
- Explain the value of the consequence
 - Moralize or threaten
 - Talk too much
 - Feel sorry and give in
- Contrive a consequence for the purpose of getting even

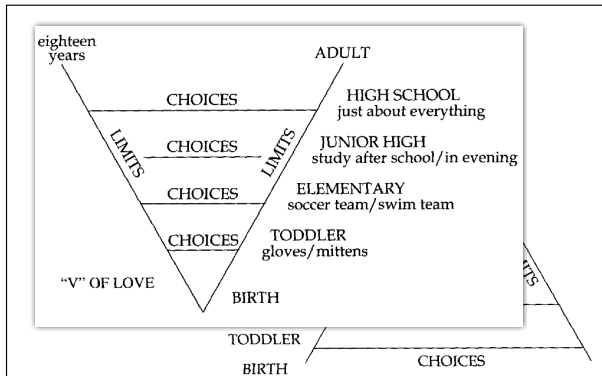
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Ownership of the Problem
 i.e., Choices

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Love and Logic Rules for Giving Choices

- Only give a child a choice that will not affect others.
- Only give a choice when there is no danger.
- Give children lots small choices and save the big choices for the adults.
- Only give choices that you like and can live with.
 - Give choices that fit your value system.
- Don't be afraid to say, "I usually give choices, but not this time."


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Some Examples of Little Choices

- Would you like to wear your coat or carry it?
- Are you going to clean the garage or mow the lawn this week?
- Will you have these chores done tomorrow or do you need an extra day to get them finished?
- Are you going to bed now or would you like to wait 15 minutes?
- Can you stay with us and stop that, or do you need to leave for awhile and come back when you are sweet?
- Are you going to put your pajamas on first or brush your teeth first?
- Will you be home at 10:00 or do you need an extra half hour with your friends?
- Are you guys going to stop bickering or would you rather pay me for having to hear it?

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Guidelines for Sharing Control Through Choices

- Never give a choice on an issue that might cause a problem for you or for anyone else.
- For each choice, give only two options, each of which will be OK with you.
- If the child doesn't decide in ten seconds, decide for him or her.
- Only give choices that fit with your value system.

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Turning Your Words into Gold: The Art of Enforceable Statements	
UNENFORCEABLE	ENFORCEABLE
Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!	I'll listen as soon as your voice is as calm as mine.
You're not going out without your coat.	You may go out as soon as you have your coat.
Pay attention!	I'll start as soon as I know you are with me.
Keep your hands to yourself.	Feel free to stay with us when you can keep your hands to yourself.
You can't go out to play until you have finished your homework.	Feel free to go play as soon as you have finished your homework.
Don't be late coming home.	I drive people to soccer practice who arrive home on time.
I'm not loaning you any more money!	I loan money to those who have collateral.
Clean up your room now!	You're welcome to join us for ice cream as soon as your room is clean.


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Neutralizing
Arguing

2 Ways:
One-liners
Broken record

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Kids are able to "hook" their parents into arguments.
Here are some

**Love and Logic
"One-Liners"**

that will get parents off the hook. The "one-liners" are only effective when said with genuine compassion and understanding.

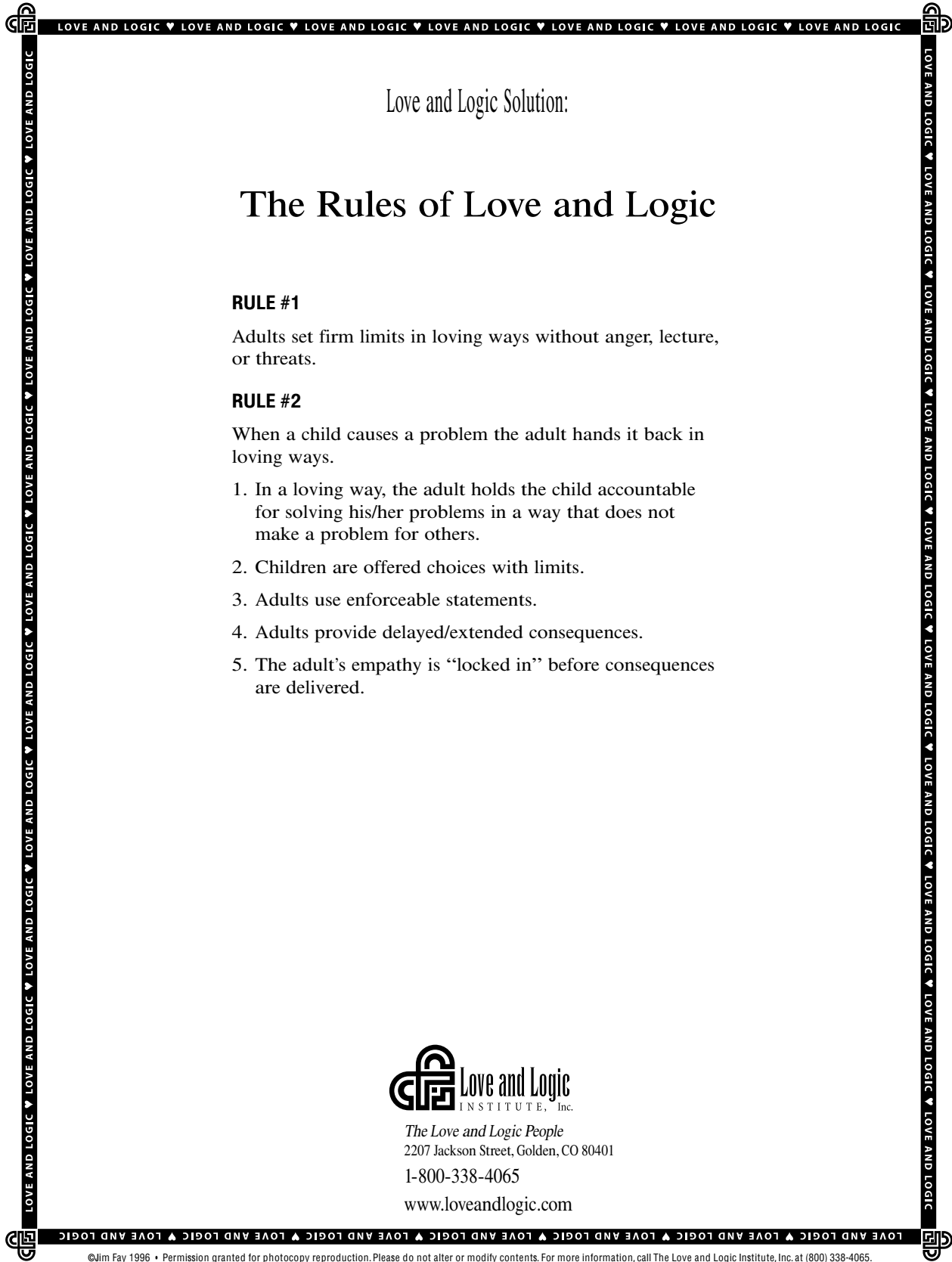
- "Probably so."
- "I know."
- "Nice try."
- "I'll love you wherever you live."
- "I bet it feels that way."
- "What do you think you're going to do?"
- "I don't know. What do you think?"
 - "Bummer. How sad."
 - "Thanks for sharing."
 - "That's an option."
 - "I bet that's true."
- "I love you too much to argue."

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Cline & Fay's survey results show:
92%
of adults feel that
young children who
make small decisions
are better prepared
to make big
decisions when they
are older.

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Love and Logic Solution:

The Rules of Love and Logic

RULE #1

Adults set firm limits in loving ways without anger, lecture, or threats.

RULE #2

When a child causes a problem the adult hands it back in loving ways.

1. In a loving way, the adult holds the child accountable for solving his/her problems in a way that does not make a problem for others.
2. Children are offered choices with limits.
3. Adults use enforceable statements.
4. Adults provide delayed/extended consequences.
5. The adult's empathy is "locked in" before consequences are delivered.



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Love and Logic Solution:

Three Types of Parents

CONSULTANT	HELICOPTER	DRILL SERGEANT
<i>This Love and Logic parent provides guidance and consultant services for children.</i>	<i>This parent hovers over children and rescues them from the hostile world in which they live.</i>	<i>This parent commands and directs the lives of children.</i>
1. The Love and Logic parent provides messages of personal worth and strength	1. provides messages of weakness and low personal worth	1. provides messages of low personal worth and resistance
2. The Love and Logic parent very seldom mentions responsibilities	2. makes excuses for the child, but complains about mishandled responsibilities	2. makes lots of demands and has lots of expectations about responsibility
3. The Love and Logic parent demonstrates how to take care of self and be responsible	3. “takes on” the responsibility of the child	3. tells the child how he/she should handle responsibility
4. The Love and Logic parent shares personal feelings about own performance and responsibilities	4. protects the child from any possible negative feelings	4. tells the child how he/she should feel
5. The Love and Logic parent provides and helps child explore alternatives and then allows child to make his/her own decision	5. makes decisions for the child	5. provides absolutes: “This is the decision you should make!”
6. The Love and Logic parent provides “time frames” in which child may complete responsibilities	6. provides no structure, but complains, “After all I’ve done for you...”	6. demands that jobs or responsibilities be done now

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Three Types of Parents, continued.

CONSULTANT	HELICOPTER	DRILL SERGEANT
7. The Love and Logic parent models doing a good job, finishing, cleaning up, feeling good about it	7. whines and uses guilt: “When are you ever going to learn. I always have to clean up after you.”	7. issues orders and threats: “You get that room cleaned up or else...”
8. The Love and Logic parent often asks self, “Who owns the problem?” helps the child explore solutions to his/her problem	8. whines and complains about having an irresponsible child who causes “me” much work and responsibility	8. takes over ownership of the problem using threats and orders to solve the problem
9. The Love and Logic parent uses lots of actions, but very few words	9. uses lots of words and actions that rescue or indicate that the child is not capable or responsible	9. uses lots of harsh words, very few actions
10. The Love and Logic parent allows child to experience life’s natural consequences and allows them to serve as the teacher	10. protects child from natural consequences, uses guilt as the teacher	10. uses punishment; pain and humiliation can serve as the teacher



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Love and Logic Solution:

The Love and Logic Generic Consequence

What do you do when a child has caused a problem or violated a rule and there appears to be no reasonable consequence available?

Love and Logic parents know the answer to this one. They use household chores for the consequence. However, they use chores in a very special way so that the youngster can make a reasonable connection to his/her doing the parent's work, and the rule violation.

It's all in the delivery

Love and Logic Parent:

"Winston. You snuck out and spent the night hanging out in the convenience store parking lot. Then you climbed back in your window, thinking I would never know about it. I told you I would have to

do something about that, but I'm sorry to say that I haven't figured it out yet even though I've spent hours on it."

"Do you know what's sad about that? I can't do two things at once. What I was going to do with my time was clean up all the dog messes in the backyard, rake the leaves, and edge the lawn and sidewalk. So...I guess as soon as you have those jobs done, we'll forget about this problem of yours. Thank you. You don't need to work on those jobs right now. Just have them done by the end of the day on Saturday. Thanks, pal."

If there is any doubt about how this parent is going to guarantee that Winston accomplishes these tasks, study the Love and Logic audiotape "*Didn't I Tell You to Take Out the Trash?*"



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Love and Logic Solution:

The Delayed or “Anticipatory” Consequence

ImmEDIATE consequences work really well with rats, pigeons, mice, and monkeys. In real-world classrooms, they typically create more problems than they solve.

Problems with Immediate Consequences:

1. Most of us have great difficulty thinking of an immediate consequence while we are teaching.
2. We “own” the problem rather than handing it back to the child. In other words, we are forced to do more thinking than the child.
3. We are forced to react while we and the child are upset.
4. We don’t have time to anticipate how the child, his/her parents, our administrators, and others will react to our response.
5. We don’t have time to put together a reasonable plan and a support team to help us carry it out.
6. We often end up making threats we can’t back up.
7. We generally fail to deliver a strong dose of empathy before providing the consequences.
8. Every day we live in fear that some kid will do something that we won’t know how to handle with an immediate consequence.

Take care of yourself, and give yourself a break! Here’s how:

The next time a student does something inappropriate, experiment with saying, “Oh no. This is so sad. I’m going to have to do something about this! But not now...later. Try not to worry about it.”

The Love and Logic Anticipatory Consequence allows you time to “anticipate” whose support you might need, how the child might try to react, and how to make sure that you can actually follow through with a logical consequence. This Love and Logic technique also allows the child to “anticipate” or worry about a wide array of possible consequences.

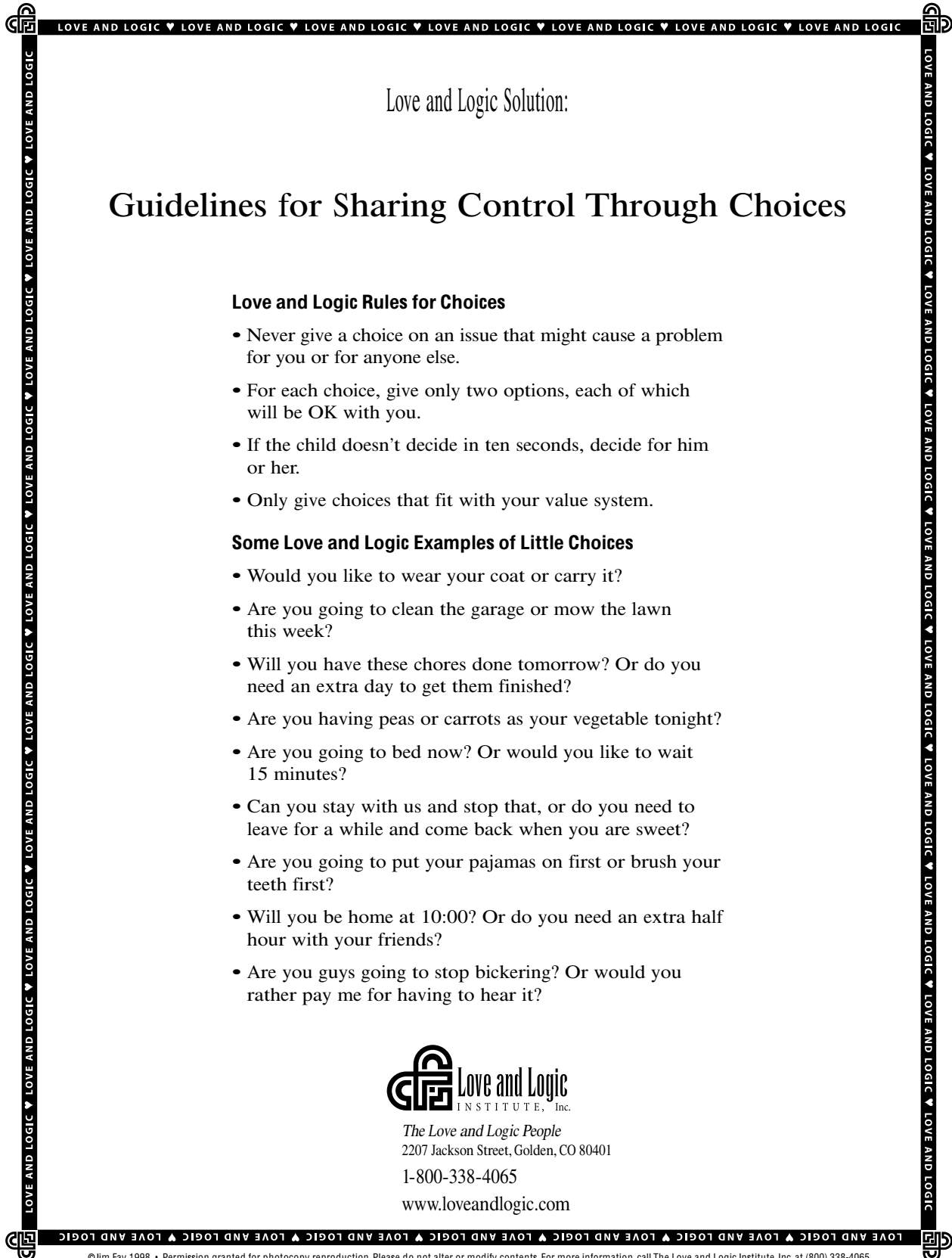
The Love and Logic Anticipatory Consequence technique gains its power from this basic principle of conditioning. When one stimulus consistently predicts a second, the first stimulus gains the same emotional properties as the second. Stated simply: When “try not to worry about it” consistently predicts something the child really must worry about, “try not to worry about it” becomes a consequence in and of itself... an “Anticipatory” Consequence.



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Love and Logic Solution:

Guidelines for Sharing Control Through Choices

Love and Logic Rules for Choices

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- For each choice, give only two options, each of which will be OK with you.
- If the child doesn't decide in ten seconds, decide for him or her.
- Only give choices that fit with your value system.

Some Love and Logic Examples of Little Choices

- Would you like to wear your coat or carry it?
- Are you going to clean the garage or mow the lawn this week?
- Will you have these chores done tomorrow? Or do you need an extra day to get them finished?
- Are you having peas or carrots as your vegetable tonight?
- Are you going to bed now? Or would you like to wait 15 minutes?
- Can you stay with us and stop that, or do you need to leave for a while and come back when you are sweet?
- Are you going to put your pajamas on first or brush your teeth first?
- Will you be home at 10:00? Or do you need an extra half hour with your friends?
- Are you guys going to stop bickering? Or would you rather pay me for having to hear it?



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Love and Logic Solution:

Turn Your Word Into Gold

The Art of Enforceable Statements for the Home

Ineffective Technique	Love and Logic Technique
Please sit down. We're going to eat now.	We will eat as soon as you are seated.
Please be quiet. I can't listen to your brother when you are both talking at the same time.	I'll be glad to listen to you as soon as your brother has finished talking to me.
Clean your room so we can go shopping.	I'll be happy to take you shopping as soon as your room is clean.
I'm not going to play ball with you until all of you are quiet.	I'll be happy to play ball with you as soon as it is quiet.
Don't talk while I'm reading to you.	I will start reading to you again as soon as you have finished talking.
You can't go play until you have finished your homework.	Feel free to go play as soon as you have finished your homework.
Don't shout at me.	I listen to people who do not yell at me.
Pay attention.	I'll start again as soon as I know you are with me.
Don't be bothering your sister.	You are welcome to stay with us as long as you are not bothering your sister.
Keep your hands to yourself.	Feel free to stay with us when you can keep your hands to yourself.
Do your chores on time or you'll be grounded.	I'll be happy to let you go with your friends as soon as your chores are finished.
Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!	I'll listen as soon as your voice is as calm as mine.
You show some respect.	I'll be glad to discuss this when respect is shown.
Don't be late coming home from school.	I drive those to practice who arrive home on time.
I'm not picking up your dirty clothes.	I'll be glad to wash the clothes that are put in the laundry room.
Keep your room neat.	All owners of neat rooms are welcome to join us for ice cream.

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Turn Your Word Into Gold, continued.

Ineffective Technique	Love and Logic Technique
I'm not loaning you any more money.	I lend money to those who have collateral.
If you can't remember your pencil, you're just going to have to do without.	Feel free to borrow from anyone but me.
You're not going out without your coat.	You may go out as soon as you have your coat.
You're not going to stay in this group and act like that.	You may stay with us if you can give up on that behavior.
Don't you come back to this room until you can show some respect!	Feel free to come back to the room as soon as you are calm.
Quit breaking the rules of the game.	Those who can follow the rules are welcome to play the game.
Get this room cleaned up right now, and I mean it!	You are welcome to join us for _____ as soon as your room is clean.
Stop arguing with me.	I'll be glad to discuss this with you as soon as the arguing stops.
If you can't treat the paintbrushes right, you'll just have to sit out this project.	All of those who can handle the paintbrushes right are welcome to join us in the project.
If you forget your permission slip, you're going to miss the trip.	All of those who remember permission slips are welcome to go on the field trip.



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15 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARENTS

I often divide my work with clients into Guiding Principles and Practical Techniques. Both are necessary as each brings something different to the table. People naturally want in-the-moment practical techniques that really work. However, techniques alone are not enough as they lack the heart needed to guide them well. Principles provide the heart, but lack the teeth and specific direction that brings success. Here we will examine just a few of the Guiding Principles that are addressed in my Parenting Mastery Groups.

1. Use “Love and Logic”

The basic Parenting with Love and Logic approach is simply this:

- Take good care of yourself as a parent;
- Give choices you can live with;
- Let consequences do the teaching;
- You respond with love and empathy.

2. Get off the lecture circuit

Don't argue, lecture, yell or nag. Lecturing is one of the least effective and the most draining of traditional parenting methods. Interestingly, these common parenting methods actually reinforce the very behaviors we are trying to extinguish—thus we are working against our own goals when we lecture, argue, yell and nag. If you must lecture, reduce your talk to what I call ultra-brief “One-sentence lectures”.

3. Problem ownership

Who owns the problem? Who is more worried about grades, chores and manners? You or your child? Learn how to make these problems for your child to own instead of you.

4. Heed ancient wisdom.

The following passages from the Bible offer timeless and sage advice to parents regardless of religious background:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

“Despise not one of these little ones.” Matthew 18:10

“Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Colossians 3:21

5. Focus on hard muscles

Focus on hard muscles (actual behaviors) vs. soft muscles (brain, thinking, feelings, attitudes, etc.).

6. Set consequences up so your child can make a better decision.

Remember that children need to experience consequences to make good choices.

7. Discipline vs. punishment

Discipline says, “I trust you can learn from your consequences.” Punishment says, “You screwed up, I'm mad at you, and you're going to get it.”

8. United parenting

Get united or get divided. Don't blame your kids if you get divided—it's not their job to set your parenting structure and boundaries for you.

9. “Hugs and praise raise good kids.”

See this article by Ann Landers at MarriageEnvy.com/resources

10. German Shepherd 101

Train your children consistently as would a good dog trainer: 1. Shape the behavior you want; 2. Model the behavior you want; 3. Track the positive behavior you want; 4. Draw out the behavior you want.

11. Do one thing different

Do one skill, approach, technique or mindset consistently for a month and trust the ripple effect. Trying to do many things poorly or partly usually leads to nothing being accomplished but frustration.

12. Catch them being good

Catch them being good more than you catch them being bad.

13. Remember, their brains are working

If your kids are making mistakes and bad choices that usually means their brains are working—as they have to fail and fail in order to learn. This is normal. Thus it's workable. Remember: We all learn by making mistakes.

14. Pick your battles

Identify what really matters. Focus your parenting energies into those few and drop the rest (at least for now).

15. Get rid of energy sapping parental blame and guilt

Just deal with what is put in front of you. So you screwed up yesterday. Today is today. Truth is, you're probably doing good enough and will probably just keep getting better over time. So ease up off of yourself. Get off your back. You'll learn it in time. We all do.

These are the Guiding Principles. Now let's look at the Practical Techniques that give teeth to these principles.

12 PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

The prior 15 guiding principles aid you in your parenting to keep you on the right path. I often divide the work with clients into guiding principles and practical techniques. Both are necessary. Techniques alone are not enough as they lack the heart needed to guide them well. Principles alone are not enough as they lack the teeth and specific direction that brings success. Let's now examine 12 practical techniques for parents.

1. "No problem."

When you're at a loss and don't know what consequence to apply say, "No problem. Don't worry about it. I'll get back to you later on this." Trust me. The kid will start to worry about it. If you don't know what to do, remember there's always a solution. Take the time to find it—and let others help you find it if you can't find it yourself.

2. Use one-liners broken-record style

Use one-liners repeated over and over in a broken-record fashion instead of engaging in arguments and power struggles. Here are just a few classic one-liners: "I know, I know." "Bummer. What are you going to do about that." "Yes, that's probably true. However, the agreement was what?" Repeated over and over and over.

3. Target the behavior you want to change

First, identify what bothers you the most. This will be the behavior targeted for extinction. Second, identify the specific behavior you want to encourage. It is important that you state it positively. For example, instead of Tommy "being rude" I will target him asking "please" and saying "thank you." Third, identify what method(s) you will consistently apply that you have learned? List step by step if needed. Fourth, identify how you will reinforce this targeted behavior. Fifth, focus on only the targeted change you want to encourage. This is a precise strategy, not a shotgun approach of trying to change several things at once. Leave other annoying behaviors on the back burner for now. Zero in on your target behavior to create the change you are seeking.

4. "No sweat. I can handle this."

Send this message to your child and yourself as the parent: "No sweat. I can handle this. It's just a minor inconvenience." This helps you keep your cool and lets the child know he/she can't push your buttons. This also sends the message to the child that he/she is okay as they are manageable.

5. Limit media influences

There are many ways of doing this. One method: give each child ten (or more or less) quarters. One quarter = (X) hour of TV time or video game playing. At the end of the week the child gets to keep what he/she doesn't spend. Another idea: Bet your child \$200 they can't go one year without TV. You'd be surprised how well this can work. That's only \$16.50/mo for less fighting over the TV and more brain stimulation—what a deal!

6. Anger antidote

Slow down, take your time to think about consequences (a few minutes to a few days is just fine). Don't give consequences in anger. Not only will your consequence lose effectiveness when given in anger, you will also lose credibility with your children (and spouse).

7. Snap 1-2-3!

Say firmly with a few seconds between each count. With each count also snap your fingers once. When you get to three be very clear that three is out, not their last chance. Make sure that three means three and not four and not seven and not "...8, 9, 10...I really mean it now!"

8. Learn to use time out effectively

Some like timers and time-out chairs. If they work for you, fine. Otherwise, allow them to come out only when they are ready to be a part of the family so long as you also have calmed down enough to have them out, too. Don't worry if they go in their rooms and play. They don't have to "get it" each time for it to work or to "think about what you did." That's expecting kids to use adult thinking. If they are throwing and breaking things you can calmly go in their room with a garbage bag and calmly state, "Oh, bummer. People who break things don't get things." Then put them somewhere the child can't get them for several days. They may have them back only if they are willing to put them away properly. Again, don't worry if they "get it" and don't expect it to "work" the first time you do it. Expect them to ramp up their tantrum behaviors. Stay the course. In time they will get it.

9. When kids use up parent's time

This is the time you have to spend dealing with the consequences of your children's choices. When this happens the kids then are to pay back the parents time by doing chores the parents would otherwise have to do themselves. Remember, children will only learn to respect you if they see you respecting yourself.

10. So you gave consequences, chores, etc. and they still won't do it?

Wow, what a surprise! Remember, "No problem." "Just have your chores done by your next meal." They may choose to wait a meal or two before their hunger makes a more convincing argument than your anger, yelling or lectures ever could.

11. "Catch them being good" chart or calendar

Write at least one thing you caught your child doing good and write that thing on the calendar. This is not only a great reward, encouragement, and a simple way to praise your children it is also a great way to shape and draw out more of the behavior you want to see.

12. Use sadness instead of madness

Consequences need to be delivered and given with sadness instead of madness in your words and tone, such as a simple but sincere, "Oh, bummer..." Lead with empathy instead of anger.

PARENTS: GET UNITED OR GET DIVIDED!

Raising children ranks the top of the list with sex and money as source for marital conflict. In a nationwide survey conducted by Stanley and Markman, children's issues ranked second (behind money) as the thing that couples argue about the most. In second marriages, the subject is even touchier, with kids (32 percent) beating finances (23 percent) as the number-one cause of marital conflict. Kids are masters at pitting one parent against the other. Here are some tips on how to work together presenting a united front in your parenting.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Divide and Conquer

6-year-old Tommy wants a Popsicle and mom says, "No," Tommy has a problem. To solve this problem he asks Dad. If Dad says, "Yes" his problem is solved and he has learned a skill he can use again when a similar dilemma arises.

Not that big of a deal, right?

Fast-forward ten years. 16-year-old Tommy now wants to borrow the car to go to the movies with his friends who you suspect are a bad influence on him. Dad said "No," but Mom said, "Yes." Mom and Dad then go the rounds because Dad thinks it is a big deal and Mom thinks he is, once again, overreacting. While Mom and Dad are fighting Tommy grabs the keys and quietly slips out the door.

That your child plays "divide and conquer" is not a sign that you have a bad kid. In fact, that your child has learned to play one parent off the other means you have a kid worth keeping. Thank goodness that your child's brain is functioning normally! Children's brains are wired for learning and problem solving. Tommy, like most kids, has learned that there are some payoffs they get for "splitting" their parents: 1. It helps them get what they want, 2. They can gain power in a situation they otherwise wouldn't be able to control, and 3. Once Mom and Dad are fighting it gets the focus off of themselves. Whatever the payoff, the result is the same: parents feel frustrated, angry and ineffective. The task for parents is to help them use their brains appropriately.

Unite and Conquer

The solution, then, is not to trade your kid in for a more obedient and compliant model. The solution is to get united. My sister tells the story of when one of her friends was playing at our house as kids. The friend asked my sister if they could go do something or other. They went to ask my mother who refused their request. My sister's friend said, "I know, let's go ask your dad." My sister, in her most dejected and frustrated tones replied, "We can't. They're united!" My sister had learned in her home what her friend had not learned from her parents: you can't get around united parents.

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR UNITED PARENTING

"Present a United Front."

The child must learn that splitting his parents against each other will never get him what he wants. It is really quite simple. You and your spouse must agree that any attempt to get the other parent's say-so after being told no by the first parent will simply, and every time, result in your child not getting what she asked for. This requires a firm resolve as sometimes you will have to stand united when otherwise one of you may have acquiesced. When children know their parents can set limits and keep them they feel secure, even if on the surface they are upset. A national survey of graduating high school seniors found that more than 90 percent wished their parents loved them enough to have disciplined them more. Also, a united front increases the effectiveness of all the other parenting approaches and techniques you use.

A united front should include both parents; divorced parents, especially, should learn valuable co-parenting techniques. Together and single parents can involve select relatives and friends, a counselor, clergy and/or a support group as part of their united front.

Planning Makes Perfect

Decide ahead of time how the both of you will handle difficult situations with your children. Anticipate problems and play "stop-gap." This is where you look for ways your kids can get around you discipline and how you will "stop-up" those gaps.

Refuse Undermining

Make a choice as parents to not undermine each other in front of you children. To say something like, "I sided with you, but Mom won" makes both of you look foolish in your child's eyes.

"Close the Door, Please."

While it is okay for children to witness their parents have and solve their differences so they can learn to do the same, it is not okay for children to witness their parents argue about them. The reason for this is simple. If they see the conflict between you about them, they gain tactical data on where best to strike in their next effort to split you. When it comes to the kids, discuss the issue behind closed doors, figure it out, and come out presenting a united front.

Does Your Management Team Know Its Policies and Procedures Manual?

Every company has one set of rules, their "policies and procedures," that every employee is expected to follow. When everyone is on the same page the company is able to run smoother and there's less conflict about what or how things should be done because expectations are clear. Churches and sports teams do the same. When there is a

conflict everyone can defer, and refer, to the same rules versus getting stuck in arguments that go nowhere. Most organized groups do this. Families rarely do. Parents are the management team of the family. Decide on your discipline rules as a team and abide by them consistently. If you cannot come to a compromise that works, do what companies do when they get stuck: hire a consultant. Seek help from a neutral third party whether that be clergy or counselor. Keep friends and family out of it.

Learn and Do What Works

In my profession, I have the opportunity to keep up on the latest research and read many books and articles on the best parenting practices. There are many excellent approaches and techniques that work really well. What I

consider the gold standard of parenting approaches is "Parenting with Love and Logic," by Jim Fay and Foster Cline, MD. Whatever approach or book you choose to use, do choose one and stick to it.

Payoffs for Everyone!

By uniting as parents everyone wins. Kids learn boundaries, respect for themselves and others, that the way to get what one wants is by working within the rules, they feel secure and they learn a great model to take into their own future parenting (a.k.a. The "Monkey See, Monkey Do" Principle). Parents gain seeing their children learn and experience the above. They also they improve their marriage and increase their confidence in parenting. Sounds like a good deal to me. Believe it or not, it is more doable than you may think.

BACKTALK: EXPERT ADVICE ON BRINGING UP BABY

Source: "Backtalk: Four Steps to Ending Rude Behavior in Your Kids", by Audrey Ricker, Ph.D., and Carolyn Crowder, Ph.D. A Fireside Book, Published by Simon and Schuster, 1998. <http://www.msnbc.com/onair/nbc/dateline/parentsurvey/backtalk.asp#quiz>

Do you see outbursts at bedtimes? Whining at meals? And 8-year-olds with an attitude who want to grow up too soon? There's a new book out called "Backtalk" by two authors who say they know why some children talk back to their parents and how you can find a solution.

Backtalk is a problem many families face today. Many parents have swung all the way from the spanking, authoritarian style of their parents to the other extreme, say Audrey Ricker, Ph.D. and Carolyn Crowder, Ph.D. In their new book "Backtalk," they offer one approach to disciplining children. Their's is just one of many philosophies about raising children. Choosing one is a very personal matter each family should consider seriously. Parents should be sure to talk to each other, their children's teachers, and others to develop the child-rearing approach that suits them and their families best.

Ricker has been a teacher and is the mother of a grown son and Crowder is a therapist who has taught parenting classes for 20 years. "We don't teach you to control the child," says Ricker. "We teach you to control your response to what the child does in a way that's going to help the situation not re-occur."

They say if you stick to their book's program it will stop your kids from using backtalk and make your home happier with a lot less tension. "Our model is not about not being the boss," says Carolyn Crowder. "Our model is about guiding and training your child." The book outlines a four-step program to change that type of behavior.

STEP 1: RECOGNIZE THE BACKTALK

Here's the best test: if it hurts you, embarrasses you, annoys you, or leaves you feeling helpless, it's backtalk. Sometimes it comes in the form of body language.

STEP 2: CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONSEQUENCE FOR THE BEHAVIOR

You should do this ahead of time. Make sure what you've decided fits the behavior. Any backtalk or rude behavior automatically means that the child will not do what she wants or has planned to do -- such as go to soccer practice or to a dance lesson.

STEP 3: ENACT THE CONSEQUENCE

In a calm voice, the parent should say the child's behavior amounts to backtalk; that it is taking the parent's time,

energy, and goodwill in her efforts to deal with it; that it is not acceptable. Simply put, immediately follow through with the action you've selected. Example: If your children refuse to get dressed for school, these experts say take them to class in their pajamas. If the child reacts badly to the statement, which they undoubtedly will, then the parent should proceed to Step 4.

STEP 4: DISENGAGE FROM THE STRUGGLE

Ignore your child's protest over the consequence you've just imposed. The parent should initially ignore the bad behavior. If the child's behavior continues, the parent should take the child to his/her room, and leave the child alone.

Dealing with age differences

How does this apply to your family? Ricker and Crowder say that while the principles of the Four-Step Program remain the same for all children, these principles can produce different reactions from children of various ages. Your use of the program may vary slightly.

HOW OLD ARE YOUR CHILDREN?

AGE 3 TO 8

Before the age of 3, children's speech tends to serve the function of boundary setting, individuation, and testing of the world. As such, it cannot be considered backtalk. But by the age of 3, communication patterns are starting to form that guidance. Children develop a strong need to belong in the family and so must learn the patterns of social behavior that will help them accomplish this goal in positive ways.

Recognizing the backtalk.

The best rule of thumb is this: if the talk, tone, or gesture upsets you, it's backtalk. "You're a poopy, I hate you" from a 4-year-old is no more acceptable than "You're a piece of s--t" from an 18-year-old.

Choosing a consequence

For backtalkers in this age group, the best consequence is probably instant removal from family activities.

Enacting the consequence

When the backtalk begins, you say cheerily, minimizing your emotional reaction, "That kind of talk (or behavior) is not acceptable in our family, Carl. Your behavior says that you don't want to be here with us. In 20 minutes perhaps you will change your mind and demonstrate that you want to be part of the group." You take Carl, screaming, to his room.

To other children who say, "He didn't mean anything," you reply, "Carl needs to learn what kind of speech is acceptable in our family. He's young and this is a good way to teach him." You then ignore the screams from Carl's room, plus sounds of banging and objects hitting walls. (The sound of glass breaking and the smell of smoke can be attended to, however.) Yes, you have to endure his misery. But the result will be well worth the price.

Disengaging from the struggle

Once Carl is removed from the scene, you disregard his yelling from the bedroom and immediately find another activity to occupy your family's attention. Anything positive will do -- discussing an upcoming birthday party, planning a weekend trip, making cookies, whatever will be positive, productive, and preclude focusing on Carl. The family needs to see that one of the consequences of backtalk is missing out on a rewarding experience.

AGE 9 TO 11

Recognizing the backtalk

Backtalk in this age bracket is usually phrased so as to indicate that the backtalker has found you are not perfect: "You are so uncool." "You can't make me." "Donny's mother keeps their house clean all the time by herself." "Donny's mother makes lots of money. Why can't you, huh?"

Choosing a consequence

You need to address the form of the backtalk, not its content. However painful that content may be, you must not dignify it with a denial ("I make lots of money, much more than Tom's mom, who doesn't even work!") or a defense ("If I weren't working to make money, I would keep the house clean.")

Take something away, remove a long-anticipated privilege, or refuse to grant an expected favor. Just be sure that the consequence is logically connected in some way to the backtalk: "That kind of tone and those kinds of words are not respectful, John. As a result, I feel less willing to spend time and energy doing what you want. I have decided not to drive you to Joey's tonight. I'm calling his mother now to cancel." This must not be said in a vengeful tone, but matter-of-factly. Starting a tit-for-tat only teaches your child about getting even. The fact is that disrespect is hurtful -- you don't show it and you won't accept it from others. Therefore, you are unwilling to do anything for the child.

Enacting the consequence

As John shrieks, you must call Joey's mother. Tell her John's behavior has not been respectful, and so he cannot visit Joey. When John escalates his rage, go into step 4 and remove him from the room.

Disengaging from the struggle

As John continues to protest from his room, begin talking to your family about interesting upcoming activities. Or do something by yourself -- take a walk, rake the yard, or read a book.

AGE 12 TO 14

Recognizing the backtalk

Teenagers have realized not only that you are not perfect but also that you are ridiculous. Backtalk from adolescents often includes shaming statements. "You don't know anything," or "You have no idea how to dress" (or apply makeup, buy a car, or work out). You are told you have been judged and found inept.

Choosing a consequence

The best consequence is one that is logical and consists of an action the teenager believes you will never dare take. For instance, the teenager backtalked his mother -- "Can't you see I'm watching the show? God!" -- when she asked him how he wanted his hamburger cooked. A logical consequence would have been for the mother to tell Joe that his tone was not acceptable and then do the unthinkable -- leave him out of dinner.

Enacting a consequence

No quarter must be given. Joe's failure to tell his mother how to fix his hamburger results in his not getting a hamburger. Many mothers would stand and wait until Joe deigned to say "rare," or "medium" or "I don't care." Then they would fix Joe's hamburger -- teaching the other children how to backtalk mother just for the fun of it and to show who's in charge.

Disengaging from the struggle

As stated, the fourth step involves getting on with your life while the backtalker continues protesting. But do you have a life worth getting on with? When you have older adolescents, having a good life of your own is especially important. Nothing impresses them more. The trick here is to be a dedicated parent -- but not a doormat with no other purpose than seeing to the happiness of your offspring. The more quickly you appear to divert your interest from the backtalker to another topic in your life, the more subdued your backtalking adolescent will be. If there's anything your adolescent cares about, it's someone else's life -- particularly one she may not be included in.

AGE 15 TO 20

Recognizing the backtalk

Simple surliness tends to be the type of backtalk practiced by this age group. It's not chic among their peers to speak politely to parents. Grunts and snorts, the making of strange sounds with mouths full (which is often the case), or deliberate silence substitute for civil answers. Insisting on actual words from the child may elicit a pouting "Will you give me a break?" Or "Can't you see I'm busy?" Or "I don't need this! Jeez!" All this whining amounts to backtalk of the most insidious and annoying sort.

Choosing the consequences

Teens this age are particularly difficult because they are by now used to getting their way with no consequences. If you're just starting to deal with their backtalk, think of all

the things you provide that they need -- housing, food, caring, nurturing, television, computer, clean sheets, and whatever else you can think of. Keep two facts firmly planted in mind: that you provide these benefits because you are able and want to; and that it's your home. Tell the child once that his backtalk is using up your energy and time. Before he can say, "That sounds like a personal problem to me," or something equally insolent, add that you won't use your energy and time doing something he wants -- such as picking up his saxophone from the repair shop or having his new girlfriend to dinner.

Enacting the consequence

Do not pick up the saxophone. Do tell him to inform his new girlfriend that the dinner invitation has been canceled.

Make a quick list of other things you planned to do for him or give him so you'll have more consequences, if necessary.

Disengaging from the struggle

Disregard his protestations that nothing in your life could be worth more time and energy than your child, no matter how that child acts. It's best when dealing with this age bracket to keep talking about your life beyond backtalk. Let the teen know what you're doing and enjoying. Continue to model the kind of communication you want from your almost-grown child.

Don't take a different approach with girls than you do with boys. Backtalk is backtalk no matter what.

CONSISTENT CONSEQUENCE RUBRIC

CONSISTENT BEHAVIORS EARN CONSISTENT RESULTS

RESPECTFUL APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR	EARNED BENEFITS	DISRESPECTFUL INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS	EARNED CONSEQUENCES

Reminders/Guidelines:

- **Normalize and validate emotions.** Whatever someone is feeling is just what they are feeling. It's normal and okay. Do not take their feelings personally. Do not argue feelings. Do not put your energy in trying to change how someone feels. It doesn't work and only creates resistance and

- resentment. Want to lose ground real quick? Just tell someone who they should feel!
- **Discipline behaviors.** Focus on the behaviors. Remember discipline is about teaching and structure. Avoid punishment which is about
- **Lead with sincere empathy** responses: "I know." "Bummer." "Aw, shoot. It's hard when this happens."

- **Blame it on policy:** "Sorry, that's just our family policy." Make the rubric the bad guy. Don't engage in the power struggle. Just keep calmly and empathetically referring back to the rubric. Don't get hooked by the power struggle, pouting, crying, name-calling, etc.

TARGETING BEHAVIOR

What I love, like, admire, respect and enjoy about my child.

What is one frustrating or inappropriate behavior I want to help my child improve on.

What is the specific behavior you want to encourage?

(State it positively: i.e., Instead of him "being rude" I will target him asking "please" and saying "thank you.")

How? What method(s) will I consistently apply that I have learned today? List step by step if needed. How will I reinforce this targeted behavior?

... ► **CONCLUSION** ◀ ...

The whole point tonight is this:

“GREAT relationships don’t just happen. They are created.”

Compare how some people try to fix a problem relationship with a big event, a cruise, a getaway, a promise, or with good intentions, or... whatever... These just don’t cut it. GREAT relationships are created.

But it’s not just hard work—it’s the right hard work.

Consider how good intentions with the right or wrong skills and info plays out:

Good intentions
+
Bad information/skills
=
Dangerous formula/recipe for disaster

Good intentions
+
Accurate information and effective skills
=
Recipe/formula for success

... ► **NEXT STEPS** ◀ ...

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What to Expect in Marriage Counseling?

The Good News: We're No Longer Guessing (A Primer to Gottman's Findings on Successful Marriage)

John Gottman, Ph.D. has been conducting marital therapy research for over 30 years and is the leader in the field. He has developed a highly predictable theory of why some marriages last and some do not, as well as an effective model for marital therapy. Gottman has studied what he calls the "masters" and "disasters" of marriage and the lessons learned from each to both replicate and avoid.

Marital Myths

Myth 1: Affairs cause divorce. While 20-25% of mediation groups state that an affair was the cause, 80% report that the real reason for divorce was a deterioration of intimacy.

Myth 2: Gender differences cause divorce. If this were true then 100% of heterosexual couples would be divorced and all gay and lesbian couples would stay together.

Myth 3: Communication problems cause marital conflict. The truth is upset people communicate very clearly what they feel and mean.

Myth 4: A lack of 50/50 causes unsuccessful marriage. While it makes sense that doing good for your partner will help you get good things back, the truth is that the research shows this is not the case for failing couples, nor is it the case for happy couples.

Marital Truths

Truth 1: Positivity in interactions in happy couples is 20 to 1, in conflicted couples is 5 to 1, and in soon-to-divorce couples is 0.8 to 1. Watching a couple interact when they are not in conflict is the best way to predict their risk for divorce

Truth 2: Marriages tend to end at one of two times:

- 5-7 years due to high conflict;
- 10-12 years due to the loss of intimacy and connection;
- While marriages certainly end before 5-7 years, as well as between 7-10 years, Gottman argues these are critical or high risk times for marriages.

Truth 3: When it comes to arguments, the type of person one partners with (attacker, soother, avoider) is not so important as the mismatch between the couple:

- Soothers overwhelm avoiders, and you get the distancer-pursuer dynamic;
- Soothers and attackers have little ability to influence each other, little positive sentiment, and a great deal of emotional tension;
- Avoiders and attackers are the worst pairing, with severe distancer-pursuer dynamic.

Truth 4: Most problematic issues (69% in fact) don't get solved, they get managed

States Of Relationships

Basically, Gottman offers that there are two kinds of states that marriage can exit in - Positive Sentiment Override and Negative Sentiment Override:

Positive Sentiment Override - PSO

Positive comments and behaviors outweigh negative ones about 20:1. This means that there is a positive filter that alters how couples remember past events and view new issues. When you dislike someone you fight over which way the toilet paper rolls. When you like them you just find it quirky or cute. PSO makes the difference. PSO is developed through:

- An intact **Fondness and Admiration System**, in which the couple is affectionate and clear about the things they value and admire in the other. Remember Oprah's idea of a "thankfulness log," or a daily list of things you appreciate and are thankful for? "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways..." is simply a good practice.
- **Love Maps** is having a good knowledge of the partner's world (work, family, self) and showing an interest in that world during non-conflict times. Couples who have well-defined Love Maps know the answers to quizzes about their partner's likes and dislikes.
- An **absence of serious conflict**, marked by:
 - **Softened Startups**, or tactful ways to bring up a problem;
 - **Soothed Physiology** during the argument so no one gets "emotionally overheated";
 - **Acceptance of Influence**, so partners (typically men) can accept the desires and wishes of their partners (typically women);
 - **Repair Attempts** or efforts to make up by using humor or conceding a point (there's about one effort every three minutes for most couples);
 - **De-escalation** of hot emotions and efforts to compromise;
 - **Bids for Affection** or efforts to connect through a shared joke, a quick kiss, or a quiet smile that is returned;
 - **Lack of Gridlock** on problem issues by finding the underlying reason for the conflict and finding a way to meet both partner's needs.

Negative Sentiment Override - NSO

Negative comments and behaviors just about equal positive ones, with five or fewer positive comments for every negative one. However, couples showing about one positive for one negative comment are on the path to divorce. This means that there is a negative filter that screens out the few positive events that exist, and may cause the couple to "rewrite" their history together. Ask them what drew them together in the first place, and listen for a negative emotional tone to see this.

- You can not confront NSO directly
- Rather, you have to build the infrastructure for PSO first, and slowly shift the couple to building it further.

- NSO is based on a few basic processes that spiral out of control:
 - Conflict shows a pattern of **Demand Change** and **Withdraw** from the discussion;
 - **Diffuse Physiological Arousal** (DPA) is needed as physiological arousal is high especially during arguments, with elevated heart rate, perspiration, and pulse;
 - Women are more likely to begin with **Harsh Startups**, while men are more likely to become **Flooded** and **Stonewall**, and to rehearse stress-inducing thoughts. Some (such as Rampage) criticize Gottman for not realizing that gender differences in most relationships make women less powerful, and thus more likely to begin an argument more harshly as a way to communicate "I can't take it any more"; however, such criticisms often ignore why gender differences that leave men feeling they have to "Buckle down and take it" when arguments become emotionally overwhelming or even abusive to them;
 - This leads to **Gridlock**, which is often resolved in either: **Disengagement**, which results in a slower divorce that ends at 12+ years; or a high conflict period marked by the **Four Horsemen**, which spells a faster divorce in 5-7 years;
 - The **Four Horsemen** are so destructive that Gottman will cut-off couples immediately when they do one of them, and confront them with how harmful this behavior is. While everyone engages in these negative communication patterns some of the time, distressed couples do them more, and couples who do them a lot are on the fast track to divorce:
 1. **Criticism**: "What kind of person are you?"
 2. **Contempt**: "I would never be so low as to do something like that!"
 3. **Defensiveness**: "Yeah? Well what about what you did?"
 4. **Stonewalling**: shutting down, associated with high physiological arousal and efforts to self-soothe with thoughts like "I can't believe she's saying this!"
- **Move Gridlock to Dialogue**. While of course you want to solve some problems, and so teaching the couple to use basic compromising skills, avoiding crazy buttons that instantly escalate the argument ("You are just like your mother!"), and using video review of the couples' arguments in the office are all important. However, since over 60% of marital problems are not solved, but managed, you want to start them talking about ways to manage these issues in the future, just as you manage a chronic illness like diabetes. The conflict is not about the topic they are discussing; rather, the real problem is some underlying or symbolic meaning, tied to a dream or fantasy of their future, that they feel they simply can not compromise on without invalidating their dreams.
- **Teach recovery after a fight**. While sure, you would prefer they avoid nasty fights, but Gottman has found in his research that fighting in and of itself is not the problem. In fact, couples who do not fight at all are more likely to end up divorced. You may not be able to teach them to avoid fighting anyway, and reflective listening skills ("What I hear you saying is...") likely won't help since no one uses them in a fight. Instead, the best bet is to teach them how to recover after a fight.
- **Teach six basic social skills**
 1. Recognizing (and avoiding) the Four Horsemen;
 2. Softening startups;
 3. Accepting influence (especially for men);
 4. Soothing physiological arousal (relaxation techniques can help partners calm down during heated arguments, but once they are upset, it may take over 20 minutes for the body to slow itself down to calm levels);
 5. Recognizing (and responding to) repair attempts;
 6. Compromise.
- **Effective repair** is easier to accomplish when there are **Rituals of Connection**, or standard and every-day ways the couple connects and feels bonded to each other. This means decreasing negativity during and after fights, as negativity is the best predictor of divorce over six years (85% accuracy), and effective repair skills increases prediction accuracy (97% accuracy), as among even highly negative newlyweds, 85% of those who effectively repair stay happily married.
- **Fade out the therapist**. As the therapist I am here for triage, training, coaching and support. Gottman starts with 90 minute sessions, then eventually moves to once every two weeks, then month, and finally to "therapy checkups" to help the couple function on their own without the therapist, and avoid relapsing into previous problems. "The best therapist is an informed partner."

Basic Marital Therapy Model

Note: Please DON'T try to be the therapist if you aren't a therapist. I spend too much time undoing well-intentioned but all the same erroneous and even damaging counsel that has to be undone and corrected. Please DO provide spiritual counsel, support and direction. I don't have the ability or authority to provide the counsel you have. This clarity of differences and strengths allows pastoral counseling and professional therapy to benefit each other greatly. I share the model with you so when you are working with a therapist you can have an idea if you are working with a well-trained therapist or not.

Gottman follows a clear but flexible model of what to do: