

***BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC***

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Anger vs. Empathy

I feel sad for children who are so controlled that they seldom make mistakes. They are the disadvantaged ones. The children who make poor choices from time to time are the ones who get to learn more about the real world and how it works.

Most of us can look back and see that many of the important lessons we learned were a result of the mistakes we made. The lessons learned best were those in which our parents allowed us to suffer the consequences of our mistakes. These were the times when our parents used more actions than words.

Example

Jennifer often forgets to take her homework to school. She calls home to ask her mother to bring the assignments to school, saying, "Gee, Mom, you don't want me to get a bad grade do you?"

Jennifer's loving mother takes the homework to school, usually with a reprimand: "How many times have I told you that I'm not going to bring this to you anymore?" This mother is giving Jennifer "**forgetting lessons**" by rescuing her. She is using meaningless words and not actions. Her anger is teaching Jennifer that Mom will get angry, but it is not teaching Jennifer to remember her homework.

Let's suppose that Mom changes her approach to this problem and allows the natural consequences to fall. She will be understanding when Jennifer calls and asks her to bring her homework to school. Her answer will be, "I'm sorry, Jennifer, but I'm not available to do that for you." She will use as few words as possible because she knows that children often use our words against us. Jennifer will probably try arguing, "Now I'm going to get a bad grade

and it's all your fault!"

Mom knows that the best way to argue with a child is not to argue. "That may be true. I'm sorry you forgot your homework. I'll see you when you get home. Have the best day possible under the circumstances."

Mom's action in this case will provide "**remembering lessons**." The words she used tell what she will do and how sorry she feels for Jennifer. This mother is using empathy and understanding instead of anger and lectures.

Mistakes or Opportunities?

Our children frequently make mistakes that hurt them. As parents, we have two possible ways of reacting when this happens. One is to use anger and lectures. The other is to use understanding or empathy. Each of these reactions does its own special job of teaching.

It is easy for us to see which is the best. However, it is important to remember that sometimes our grandparents, parents, or teachers taught us through their actions to use anger.

If we saw and heard anger as a child, our hardest job in parenting is overcoming this influence.

Those who are best at this plan ahead. They know that it is difficult to change in the "heat of battle" or when feelings are at a high pitch. Practice and rehearse new actions during quiet times so you can come across in new and surprising ways to your youngster. It's fun to be the one who is in control.

***ANGER teaches children to look at the adult's anger
EMPATHY teaches children to look at their lives and decisions***