

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

“Don’t Roll Your Eyes at Me!”

“Every time I ask Sondra to do something, or even when I want to talk to her—it happens,” one mom said. “She slumps her shoulders and kind of tilts her head a little, and then she gives me this look that could open oysters at fifty paces. It really fries me. And I don’t know what to do about it.”

Negative body language. Those irritating shows of displeasure our children throw at us when we ask them to do something they don’t want to do, or talk about something they don’t want to talk about.

Most parents read these messages to mean their children are copping a bad attitude. But what does Sondra really mean when she fires that icy glare at her mom? Is she disappointed, angry at herself, trying to say that mom’s unfair, saying that she feels hurt, let down or criticized, or what? Sondra’s mom doesn’t know for sure, but it is natural for her to assume that it is directed at her. This assumption often leads to unnecessary trouble.

The best response is to say what we have to say, and then walk away. Negative body language is not a problem for us if we don’t see it, and if we don’t make a problem out of it. However, if it continues, we need to think about our own behavior. What did we do or say the instant before our child shot his or her eyes toward the sky? Did we criticize? Is he or she merely reacting to that criticism?

Kids are like adults when it comes to taking criticism, they react to it, often in a negative way. The time to deal with this negative behavior is when both parent and child are calm and reasonably happy.

It’s a good time to get to the root of the problem:

Mom: “Hey, Sondra, is this a good time to talk?”

Sondra: “Yeah, I guess so.”

Mom: “You know, I’ve been noticing when I say something to you, you give me your nuclear fission look, and I have a hard time reading what that really means. Some kids do that because they don’t feel it’s safe to say they’re hurt or disappointed. Some kids do that because they’re unhappy. Other kids do it because they hate their parent and wish they would shut up. Do you have any thoughts on that?”

Sondra: “No. “

Mom: “I would sure like to hear about it if you do. One thing I’m thinking is maybe I’m doing something to put you down or criticize you. If you feel you’re up to telling me something about that, I’d sure like to be a good listener.”

Then mom should drop the issue and see what happens.

If the negative body language is such a constant that we can successfully predict when it will happen, we might preface our remarks to our child with a comment like, “Hey, Sondra, I have something I want to share with you. Now, when I get through you might want to try to melt me with that laser look you’re so good at, so you might want to get it ready just in case.” This will be a double bind for Sondra and probably eliminate the laser look, at least this time.

Negative Body Language is Best Dealt with at Happy Times