

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

“Smart Mouth” Can Be Cured

“What’s wrong with her? No respect! Every time I turn around she’s talking back.” This complaint from a parent reminds me that concerns about kids who “talk back” come up often. Sassing is a frustrating problem.

Solving this problem usually requires a change of behavior for both child and adult. As an adult, I like to look at my own behavior first because it is something I can control. An effective way a parent can do this is to wait until the next time his or her youngster talks back and think, “What did I say a split second before the sassing happened?”

We often find that the child felt criticized and was reacting to the criticism. It is good to state reasonable expectations for a child, and it is very good to apply consequences with empathy for the child who does not meet those expectations. However, criticizing a youngster does not usually bring about any long-term behavior change. Instead, it breeds resentment and erodes self-confidence.

Once the parent has eliminated criticism, it’s time to talk with the child. Brief discussion is useful when parents remember to discuss problems with children only during happy times. The purpose of this talk is to motivate the child to think about his

or her actions and to learn new ways of talking so better understanding takes place.

The parent might begin by asking the child what he/she is angry about. It is absolutely necessary that the parent listen without defending or judging. The best reaction is to say, “Thanks for sharing.”

A parent might also say, “Sandy, can you think of different ways you can answer me, so I’ll know what you really want when you talk about it?”

To the usual response, “I don’t know,” the parent can respond, “Well, that’s sad. But I bet you can come up with some new ideas. If not, let me know if you’d like some suggestions about how adults try to handle these things. Good luck!”

If the child has no idea what to say, the parent can ask if the child would like to hear some suggestions. Some words the child might use instead of sassing are: “That’s embarrassing,” or “I’m really angry,” or “Can we talk about it?”

We often make progress with the problem of sassing when we eliminate criticism, help the youngster express his/her feelings, help the child find new words, and then provide practice.

***Children often talk back as a
result of feeling criticized***