

***BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC
Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

Don't Touch!

I hate to go shopping. I've hated it for as long as I can remember. A number of people in the past have tried to help me with my problem but to no avail.

I had a flashback the other day. I was coping with yet another shopping excursion by watching parents deal with their kids, when I suddenly heard a slap followed by the sound of a screaming parent:

"How many times have I told you not to touch? Do you want to go into the restroom for another spanking? Don't you make me tell you one more time to keep your hands off the things! Don't touch! And I mean it!"

There was the flashback. I could see myself fifty years ago in Thrifty Drug Store in Los Angeles. There I was, going through the store, doing what little kids do, trying to be big by doing the same things the big people did.

The adults touched and examined the merchandise. I touched and examined the merchandise. Then I was reprimanded, and my hands were slapped.

Human beings, by nature, are copying animals. This means we learn best by watching others and imitating their behavior. That is one of the reasons we have so many habits, values, and mannerisms that are similar to those of our own parents.

This imitating happens on the subconscious level. We are never actually aware of it taking place. Psychologists call it learning through modeling.

Many of the battles I see in the shopping centers between kids and parents can be traced back to this issue of modeling. Unfortunately, many parents are frustrated when their kids try to act like adults.

There is a solution

Step One-

Teach your children to act in independent, yet responsible, ways. For instance, many parents have found it helpful to spend a little time teaching their children how to be responsible shoppers. They teach their children how to touch the merchandise, when to touch and when not to touch.

Step Two-

Let your youngster know you only touch things you can afford to pay for in case of an accident. This gives you something to say instead of, "Don't touch." From this point on, it will be more effective to ask, "That costs twenty nine dollars. Can you afford to pay for it?" Most children will say, "But I won't break it. The adult's answer at this point should be, "That's not the point. We agreed that you can touch things you can afford to buy. Please put it back."

Step Three-

Some time is spent actually practicing in a store on items that are unbreakable. Tell your youngster the two of you are going into the store today to look at things and practice deciding which things should and should not be touched. Then spend a little time practicing the right way to touch, and how to put things back.

Step Four-

Now it is time to catch the child doing it right so you can provide some positive reinforcement. "Look how well you are doing. It makes me happy to see you acting so grown up." In the event things are not going well, you can ask, "What was our agreement about that?"

Step Five-

Once the lesson is taught, and there have been opportunities for practice, you can provide a short little review before you walk into a shopping area: "Tell me how you plan to handle your shopping. I'm anxious to hear how well you can do."

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