

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

“No” Is Not a Four-Letter Word

Young people need to know their parents are able to say “no” and mean it. However, our children rarely thank us for having the strength to set limits. Instead, they may pout, stomp around, run to their rooms, whine or talk back. This often leaves the adult angry and confused.

Why are children so testy when we do what’s best for them? Children who have no external controls often misbehave as a way of getting us to provide enough control for them to feel confident about their place in the world. Children need to test limits to make sure they are firm. Some children use anger, some use guilt, some are sneaky, while others prefer to use forgetting to test our resolve when we say “no.”

It helps to remember young people hear the word “no” far too often. “No” is a fighting word. Youngsters may wage war against “no” in subtle ways. They may try to get their parents to do all the thinking while they stand back in judgment. Their opening ploy is often, “Why,?” or “Why can’t I,?” or “Why do I have to?”

Parents who are busy reasoning with their children have neither the time nor energy to win battles. Caring parents who feel guilty about saying “no” so often are soon hooked into doing lots of thinking

and explaining. All the youngster had to do now is interrupt the parent’s explanations from time to time with, “But Dad, it’s just not fair. You just don’t understand.” Soon the parent is worn down and gives in. “All right! Take it! But this is the last time.”

You can turn the tables on children, forcing them to do most of the thinking. State your decision without saying “no.” Then, whatever the youngster says, simply agree *that* is probably true *and* repeat your original decision. This is called Negative Assertion.

Here’s how it can work in practice:

Teen: “I need some money to go to the movies.”

Dad: “Feel free to use your allowance.”

Teen: “I need more money.”

Dad: “That’s sad. But there will be more coming on Saturday.”

Teen: “I promised the guys.”

Dad: “I’m sure that’s true...and...you’ll be getting more money on Saturday.”

Teen: “But I won’t have enough money for gas for the car.”

Dad: “I’m sure that’s true, too...and...there will be more on Saturday.”

Teen: “Geel Money is such a big deal to you.”

Dad: “That could be true, too...and...”

Teen: “I know, I know, you don’t have to say it again.”

State your decisions without saying “no”