

EMPOWERED

To Connect

Ways to Help Your Child Learn New Behaviors

Life Value Scripts

Script

Showing respect

Explanation

Children need to learn to treat themselves and others with respect. Parents must be consistent not to tolerate disrespect of any kind. Respectful behaviors include respectful voice, respectful facial expressions and attitudes, respecting others' personal space and respecting others' belongings. If a child is disrespectful, parents can redirect with the short statement, "Try that again with respect." When a child is respectful, reinforce with, "That was great showing respect!"

Use your words

Children from hard places often express their needs or feelings through behaviors – tantrums, withdrawing, running away or aggression. Although it is important to understand these behaviors in terms of the underlying needs or feelings, it is important to continually prompt the child to "use your words" to express his needs and feelings. However, children from hard places often find it difficult to know the right words to use. Therefore, it is important for parents to also model "using your words" for their child. You might tell the child, "Right now I am feeling sad. What are you feeling?" Be sure to also praise him with "That's great using your words!" when he does use his words.

Gentle and kind

Children from hard places can be prone to rough and unkind play and interactions with others. Therefore, it is important to practice being "gentle and kind" in order to help them increase their self-awareness and learn to modulate their behavior. Such practice also helps them learn the difference between a rough and soft touch or a mean and kind facial expression. Parents can practice this script with a puppy or kitten or even a stuffed animal and guiding the child in touching and holding the animal or toy gently and treating it kindly. If the child is being aggressive, he can be prompted with "Was that gentle and kind? Try that again." Praise him with, "That was good being gentle and kind!"

Script

Explanation

Who is the boss?

Children who have experienced unpredictable and chaotic environments early in life often want to have control of others around them. A way to deal with this issue is to calmly tell the child that the parent is in charge. When the child makes demands, calmly ask her “Who is the boss here? Are you the boss?” Once they acknowledge that they aren’t in charge, a response can be to lovingly remind me them, “That’s right. I am your mom/dad and I am the boss, so it’s not your job to tell others what to do. I promise to be a good boss of you.”

Listen and obey

The parent is the authority with the child. When a child is given an instruction, it can be helpful to remind her, especially if she hesitates in following the instruction, to “listen and obey.” Always follow with, “Good listening and obeying.” You can also implement “practice drills” in the form of games that require immediate compliance, such as *Simon Says* so that the child can playfully practice the skill. By using the game *Simon Says*, you can ask the child to mimic your words, voice (tone and loudness), body and facial expression. This is called “matching,” and it is a great way to allow you and your child to practice being attuned to (i.e., in sync) with one another.

Accepting “No”

Although it is important to show children that we care about their desires, it is necessary that we also teach them how to handle occasional disappointments without a behavioral meltdown. A child may ask to do something special, and the parent responds in a kind but firm voice, “That is really good asking, but this time I’d like for you to practice ‘accepting no’.” Then, before the child can begin a meltdown, the parent quickly responds with the affirming praise, “Wow! That’s great ‘accepting no!’” In this manner, the child (almost) painlessly begins to defer getting his own way. By combining this technique with ample positive interactions, the child may begin to develop the ability to comply and to trust the parent.

Source: Adapted (with permission) from the work of Drs. Karyn Purvis and David Cross, TCU Institute of Child Development (www.child.tcu.edu)