

## The Counselor's Corner

### **Please stop YELLING!**

Within the last six months, I was shocked during an encounter with a clerk at a bakery. After opening two boxes of special order cakes at a party and finding not only the incorrect frosting, but the word birthday incompletely written, it seemed like I should make that place aware of what had happened. Instead of an apology or a decent discount, the clerk screamed and lost control. It rattled me. I did not deserve this treatment, and I have not visited that bakery since. Her actions conveyed that she did not understand customer service or respect.

We are not human if we claim that we have never yelled. We are often unprepared for stressors that bombard us and catch us off guard. Parenting brings more challenges, because it is a course we run with great intentions but little guidance. We carry an ideal picture around that is quickly smashed when our children do bizarre things, don't study like we think they should, embarrass us, or question our intentions. There is no running away from these situations, because children will make mistakes on their way to becoming independent adults. How we handle misbehavior is critical. Yelling is not a good option, even though some parents found that technique utilized in their own upbringing. Stop it right now!

Giving up yelling is always the ideal, but how does one do that? Jami Bowen gives us some great advice in an article called, "10 Ways to Stop Yelling". The key is to take control of ourselves before addressing a child's behavior problem. To do this, Jami suggests **giving ourselves a "time out"** to breathe and think before responding. When appropriate, distancing ourselves from the situation for two minutes can be helpful, along with a reminder that "we all have good kids; [but] sometimes their behavior just stinks". Misbehavior can provide a springboard for teaching. Our children need us to be calm role models who only talk in calm but stern voices when upset.

Conflict situations can be minimized when rules are clear and consistent, and children and adults know what to expect when a rule is broken. It is an ounce of prevention that will pay off. We cannot assume that our children should know how to act or what to do unless we have provided them with guidance. Even then, keep in mind that they are our children, not our adult children. They, like us, are imperfect.

Praise is very important. I love to get, and I bet you do, too. The more we receive genuine affirmation, the better we feel. Praise makes us more open to suggestions, too. Our children thrive for our approval. It is their proof that they are loved. Never take a child's good behavior for granted. Let them know we appreciate the good they do.

When we yell, children take it personally. They often feel they are bad rather than just a kid who made a bad choice. My heart breaks when I either witness a parent flying off the handle and name-calling, or I hear about it. In Lisa Mooney's article, "Long Term Effects of Yelling at Children" (June 18, 2015), four things really **impressed and depressed me**. Continuous yelling can cause children to become aggressive toward their peers, and their poor social interaction may cause them to lose friends. Because yelling is a form of emotional abuse, the self-esteem of children can be negatively impacted. Children can also become fearful of loud voices and withdraw. Last, children who tune yellers out, often have problems with concentration in school, because a pattern of tuning out and escaping is already in place.

When it comes to the bakery, I do not want to return, and I have no obligation to do so. In contrast, our children must return to us, because they are in our care. With very few exceptions, parents want to do the best they can for their children, but surveys tell us that 100% of parents have yelled at their children at some time. So, we are all in that boat, even if some of us are not even aware of when we raise our voices. So, let us grab hold of the oars that direct our boat. Let them lead us to self-awareness and better choices. We cannot let yelling overpower the good we all possess. When we ditch yelling and choose respect, everyone wins. Peace on earth will begin with us.

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