

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Connection Before Correction



BY: KIM DEMARCHI

One of my favorite quotes around the topic of parenting is “Where did we get the notion that in order to make children behave better, we must first make them feel worse?” Read this quote again. Slowly. Think about

it. Powerful, isn't it? We, as parents, usually have very good intentions, and sometimes still can get caught up using tactics that aren't necessarily the most effective with our children.

It's a mistake to think the best way to help our children to do better is to criticize, shame, ridicule, humiliate, or punish them. Has that ever motivated you long term? Did that work for you as a child? Does it work

for you now as an employee or in your adult relationships? Probably not. This doesn't mean you shouldn't let your children know when there is room for improvement, growth or change. It does mean that you don't need to make them feel worse in order to get them there. Children usually know when they need to do better, just like adults usually know. If you are overweight, do you need your spouse to point it out to you? Again, probably not. If they did, would that pump you up and motivate you to lose the pounds? It might, but probably at a great cost. Delivery is crucial.

Extensive research shows that we cannot influence children in a positive way until we create a connection with them. It is both a brain and heart issue. Sometimes we literally need to stop dealing with the misbehavior and first heal the relationship. So, how do we create meaningful connections with our children on a daily basis?

- **Spend special time with your child.** What would create a greater connection for your child than to know you enjoy spending one on one time with him or her? It doesn't have to be lengthy or costly. It could be that 15 minutes at the end of the night when you are cuddling in bed and sharing your thoughts.
- **Listen.** Really listen. Stop doing whatever you are doing and give your child your full focused attention. That means not thinking about everything on your “to-do” list!
- **Validate your child's feelings.** Don't we all feel connected when we feel heard and understood? Once our children feel heard, they'll usually hear us in return.
- **Focus on solutions WITH your child.** That is, after a cooling off period. It's not about handing out consequences to teach a lesson, but about brainstorming solutions to a problem with your child so that they have a voice and more buy in to being part of solving the problem.
- **Ask curiosity questions.** By asking questions it helps children explore the consequences of their choices instead of imposing consequences on them. Sincere non-judgmental questions open the heart and the rational brain, thus equalizing connection.
- **Hugs.** As silly as this sounds, there are times when all of us need nothing more than a hug. You are on the same team with your child, not against them.



Once the connection is made, children are then much more open to hearing respectful correction. If the correction is seen to come from unconnectedness, the acceptance rate is much lower. If we as parents take the time required to develop this wide, deep and durable connection, our less popular moves (correction) are more likely to be not only accepted, but effective.

Just like us, children prefer to be treated as persons, not just behavior generating machines. The quality of the relationship we create with our child profoundly influences the course and the outcome of our biggest job ever - parenting our children to autonomy. Connection lasts a lifetime; the need for correction is a must, but minor in comparison. Remember, parenting is a marathon, not a sprint!

Kim DeMarchi, M.Ed., Certified Parent Educator and Certified Family Coach, is a Tualatin resident, married with 17 year old boy/girl twins, and has been an educator for more than two decades. Kim is trained and certified through Positive Discipline, as well the International Network for Children and Families in a program called Redirecting Children's Behavior. Kim is active in supporting her local parenting community by providing workshops, coaching families and writing articles for our newspaper. Kim is a monthly guest on KATU's Afternoon Live and AM Northwest. She also blogs twice a month for Knowledge Universe's Kindercare online community. Kim's goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through EmpoweredParenting.com.



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Thursday, February 22, 2018 • 7:00 - 8:15pm

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