

4 Smart Ways to Resolve Conflict With Your Child

During the Great Depression and World War II, the mayor of New York was Fiorello Enrico La Guardia. He was a magnanimous leader packed into a five-foot body. La Guardia was tightly connected to all of the workings of the city. It was common for him to go along on police raids, accompany fire departments when the alarm sounded, and sit as the magistrate in the courtroom. These stories have been well documented. As legend has it, one cold day he was presiding over police-court when a tattered elderly man was brought before him. He was charged with stealing bread. La Guardia stated, "I have to punish you. The law makes no exception. I sentence you to a fine of 10 dollars."

Then the mayor pulled out 10 dollars and paid the man's penalty. He then proceeded to fine everyone in the courtroom 50 cents for living in a city where a man needed to steal bread to eat. The fines were collected and given to the man. The judgment was a blend of justice and mercy. It was also a great life lesson of human decency. As parents, we are confronted daily with being a judge and jury over our kids. They fight, willfully disobey and can be disrespectful. How do we use these moments to mold and shape them? Becoming wise when dealing with these situations is critical. When resolving conflict with your children, here are 4 ways to be a wise father.

1. Give Them a Fair HEARing

Ask a lot of open-ended questions. Give them a chance to tell their story. Let them reveal things and see if you can find discrepancies. Asking the right question may even cause them to convict themselves. If you are mediating a sibling fight, give each of them a chance to tell their version. Do not let

the opposing party interrupt. Remind them they had their chance or will get their chance next.

2. Point Them Towards Thinking of Others

Human beings care most about themselves. The word “mine” is one of the first words of almost any child. Direct your attention at this basic fault at the core of humanity—selfishness. Move the approach from behavior modification to heart transformation. Raise up in them an appreciation for the dignity of others, considering others first before themselves. Better decisions are sure to follow, not because they are programmed to follow the rules, but because it will be the natural outworking of a selfless core.

3. Don't Judge Based on the Past

The past will affect how you treat current situations. Guilt or innocence must be determined by the evidence at hand, not past wrongs. However, elevating punishment based on past behavior may be appropriate when guilt is determined. Recognize consistencies and use them to scrutinize what is happening below the surface.

4. Stay Focused When You Are Tired

When it is late in the day and fatigue has set in, you need to fight the temptation of giving snap judgments. It's easy for me just to snap at my kids and yell, “Stop it!” Doing so misses a teaching opportunity. Yelling at your kids may get them to stop, but it doesn't teach them anything valuable. Take a breath and focus. The issue at hand is the most important thing to your child at that moment. Your decision will have an impact on their lives.

What other things make a parent a good judge and jury? {eo}

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