

Make Things Right With Your Children When You're Wrong

One of the toughest conversations you'll ever have with your son or daughter may be one of the most important:

"Joel, tell me the truth."

It was a hot summer day, and good ol' Dad was called in to resolve another family dispute. My son looked at me indignantly.

"Joel, are you telling the truth?"

"Yes, Dad. Honest."

I knew that if I studied his face long enough, he'd give himself away. But that day, he was rock solid. So ... I made the call. "No, you're not, Joel. I don't believe you."

As I doled out the appropriate punishment, Joel showed no sign of remorse. Minutes later, I found out through one of the other kids that Joel *had* been telling the truth. I had judged him and punished him unfairly. *I was wrong.*

I don't think there's anything more gripping for a father than coming face to face with your own mistakes. You know what you have to do: go back to the child, confess that you were wrong and ask for forgiveness. It's humbling to be sure, but it's also one of the most important things you can do as a father. It's the ultimate moment of modeling.

Asking your child for forgiveness demonstrates that, as in all relationships, there is give and take. He learns that your rules of discipline are not arbitrary, and that you hold yourself accountable to those rules as well. By admitting you were wrong and seeking forgiveness, you prove to your child that restoring the trust of the relationship is more important

than your own pride.

But it goes even further. Think of the relief your child must feel. He has been punished unjustly, but you haven't blown off his feelings. You didn't just say, "Hey, life isn't fair," and expect him to understand. Seeking his forgiveness symbolizes that you are responsive to your child. He has suffered unjustly, and you want to make things right.

Have you blown it recently? Do you still need to go back to your child and make things right?

We all make mistakes that hurt the people around us—including our children. And we all need forgiveness.

"Joel, will you forgive me?"

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