

Parenting - Just Say NO!

The longer I am a psychologist, the more convinced I am that I need to start a “Just Say No” program geared toward parents rather than kids. I need to start a program that gives parents permission to say “No” to many of their children’s requests. I find that today’s parents are guilt-ridden, largely related to not spending much time with their children, and so they give in to nearly every request. Parents today choose to spend so little time one-on-one with kids and as families that they want to make the time they have smooth and happy. Thus, many homes have become like the old tales of the weekend divorcee, with whom everything is fun. Whether it be giving in to junk food and drinks, spending money on items at a store that were not a planned purchase, agreeing to activities that are too much in a given day or that are not appropriate to the child’s age, parents are today are too easy. The results are self-centered, demanding children who have no ability to delay gratification, and no ability to earn/work for anything. Do you suppose you became a responsible adult by your parents giving in to your every whim? Of course not! You earned many of the material goods and privileges you received, even when you were small (or at least you had to wait for Christmas or a birthday to get that new thing you wanted so badly). Further, how can we expect our teenagers to learn the lessons they need to be competent adults if they never have to pay for their clothing, I-Pods, or cars (or even a portion of them)? Give your children the gift of “No” to more *things* and “Yes” to more time *building relationship* (such as playing board games, having long talks, and going on family outings). Many of them don’t know that connection is what they are really asking for when they nag us for more stuff. They will be forever grateful that you saw the deeper NEED under the surface WANT. In addition, treat them with respect by giving them more chores and requiring them to get a job outside the home in their pre-teen years (even if this is shoveling snow for the old lady next door). They will thank you later for building their character in this way!