

A Short Parenting Tip

Be Firm but Express Empathy

One of the ways to help children learn from life is to become their counselor or coach. Life is a great teacher and when it dishes out its lessons, you, as a parent, have a great opportunity to support, encourage, and coach your child to learn from the experience.

The key is to express empathy and validate the pain or disappointment your child is experiencing. Then, you can gently move into a suggestion mode if needed. For example, when the cat scratches your three-year-old son who is playing rough, don't just launch into a lecture. Instead say something like, "Ouch, I'll bet that hurt. It looks like he doesn't like rough play does he?"

Or when your eight-year-old daughter is hungry before dinner because she refused to eat lunch you might say, "I'll bet you're hungry. That's a long time to go without food."

If you leave out the empathy and just move into a lecture mode, children may react poorly. They may view your approach as condescending or cold and respond with anger or hostility. Empathy communicates love; while at the same time allows the child to accept responsibility for the problem.

Empathy is a primary ingredient for partnership. Empathy reveals understanding and care. Empathy validates the emotions a child is experiencing even though the actions that come out of those emotions may need correction. Demonstrating your love while your child learns from experience can be one of the best ways to teach children lasting lessons about life.

This idea was taken from the audio CD series, "Eight Secrets to Highly Effective Parenting," by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.

For more information about building a strong and effective correction routine in your family check out the Training Manuals and CDs called Parenting is Heart Work. These manuals are used for in-depth training of parents both for individual study and also for mentoring others. You can learn more at www.biblicalpharenting.org.