Build respect, avoid physical punishment

Yvette:

At what age should you stop spanking your child?

Nikki

Nikki:

I don't believe that you should ever start spanking a child. I know many parents will disagree with me on this. My approach to parenting is fair and consistent expectations and consequences.

Your children should respect you because of the role you play in their life. If your children will obey you only because you spank or threaten to spank, what will you do when they are teenagers?

The best approach to parenting is one built on respect. Establish fair and consistent behavior and consequences for your child and you'll find that you don't need to resort to physical punishment.

Yvette

Yvette:

I have a 20-month-old little girl who likes the taste of her toothpaste too much to brush her teeth. She doesn't want help and fights me when I try to brush them for her. She just sucks the toothpaste off the brush and asks for more. I brush my teeth with her; she can see how I do it. I explain to her that it's important, but I can't get her to brush them. Any suggestions?

Colleen

Colleen:

I spoke with dentist Dr. Jeffrey
Tilson, and he says that the brushing is
more important than the toothpaste at
this age. Continue to show her how to
brush her teeth and assist. If she eats
the toothpaste off the brush, go ahead
and help her with the brushing technique — without additional toothpaste
— until she decides to brush on her

Remember, part of her behavior is

New mailing address for Yvette

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asserting her independence. Continue to tell her why brushing is important. Also, explain that if she brushes her own teeth, you won't have to help.

Tilson says even a few seconds of brushing with your help will be beneficial for her teeth.

Two-year-olds can be strong-willed. Hang in there.

Yvette

Yvette:

My 3-1/2-year-old daughter has slept through the entire night, from 8 p.m.to 7 a.m., since she was 8 weeks old.

At 3 years, she started waking at night and calling out for mommy or daddy. She doesn't get out of bed, but if we ignore her calls, they usually escalate into cries. We've been going into her room to calm her. Resisting the temptation to get in bed with her, my husband will sit on the floor and hold her hand until she goes to sleep. This is wreaking havoc on my husband and me. She does this two or three times a night; we're getting no sleep.

It has been going on now for about eight months. Can you offer any suggestions?

Susan

Susan:

I'm afraid you have unconsciously reinforced the very behavior you're trying to stop. You've indicated there have been no changes in the household such as problems between mom and dad, new babies or new people living in the house or variations in her bedtime routine.

If everything has indeed remained status quo and there is no reason to believe she is frightened or sick, then the best thing to do is to let her cry. It's OK to check on her but don't stay in the room.

Make sure she doesn't take a late nap or eat within two hours of going to bed. Give her a warm bath before bed. She'll make a fuss the first few nights, but she will stop when she can no longer get your attention.

Yvette

Yvette:

I have a 2-year-old daughter who, as part of her soothing ritual, twirls her hair and pulls some out. Needless to say, she hardly has any hair left. What can I do to stop this habit?

Staci

Staci:

Is she also sucking her thumb? These two habits often go hand in hand.

Columbus Children's Hospital's Dr. Olivia Thomas says the hair pulling usually stops when the thumb sucking stops. She suggests that you help her find other ways to soothe herself. When she starts to twirl and pull, interrupt her and give her a stuffed animal or something else to hold and squeeze.

If it happens at night in bed, you may want to wrap her hair and put a scarf on her head. This is a behavior that young children usually grow out of. Having them do something else usually works best.

Yvette

Yvette:

I have three girls ages 5, 4 and 2 years. My 4-year-old began preschool this year and goes two days a week. She has always been shy in new situations or with new people until she becomes more comfortable.

My issue is that she has been in school for six months now and still does not interact with the other kids and does not talk to her teachers.

Although this is her first group experience, I thought that by now she would be comfortable enough to socialize in the school setting. She is very talkative, playful and socializes well at home and with her neighborhood friends.

When I pick her up from school, she excitedly tells me what she did and seems to really like school. Is this something I can expect her to just "get through" or should I be doing something?

Jill:

Some children are better with consistent routines and settings. Two days a week may not be enough for a child who is shy in new situations. Try increasing the number of days she attends school, or if that is not an option, arrange play dates with some of the children from her class. Once she has a buddy or feels more comfortable, she'll relax and socialize the way she does at home. As long as she is happy with school and looks forward to going, I wouldn't be concerned.

Yvette

Jill



Yvette McGee Brown is a former Domestic Relations/ Juvenile Court Judge. She is currently the president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Columbus Children's Hospital.