

It's my party and I'll lie if I want to

Yvette:

I just found out my 16-year-old daughter threw a party at our house when I was out of town on business. She was supposed to be staying at a friend's house. Yikes! I reacted by trying to speak with her and have her explain and then I took away her privileges. Can you suggest a better way to handle this? I can't ground her forever.

Pam

Pam:

It sounds like you handled it fine. You can't ground her forever, but you can make her miserable for a while — just kidding.

I tell my children that trust is hard to earn and easy to lose. Your daughter should know she's lost your trust and with the loss of trust goes some of the freedom and privileges she has enjoyed. She'll have to earn them back. If she has a car, perhaps she should enjoy taking the bus for a while. A car requires responsibility so she needs to demonstrate she can be responsible. If she has a curfew, perhaps move it back an hour.

Most importantly, don't be angry. Tell her you aren't doing this out of anger; you're responding to her maturity. When she demonstrates she can behave in a mature manner and you can trust her when she tells you something, you're happy to give her more privileges. It's important she learns the value of being truthful, even at 16. Good luck.

Yvette

Yvette:

I need advice! I have a child who is very well-mannered and calm. He is pleasant and gets along with others. He doesn't watch violent movies or TV shows. I'm confused because this child is talking about violence. He'll make comments such as "Let's cut their heads off" or "Have you ever saw a bad man just burn a house down?" He stays home with me and goes to church. He doesn't spend a lot of time around other children, except at church. I wouldn't say that I'm worried about this yet as I know he's not a danger. However, it does bother my husband and me, and I think it needs attention.

Terena

Terena:

I would monitor his television programs more closely. The Disney Channel or Cartoon Network can have very graphic, violent cartoons, particularly during the evening hours. Children have active imaginations. He simply may be parroting something he saw or heard on TV. He also may be responding to something he heard from another

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child. You're correct not to overreact to his statements but to use the opportunity to explain that these statements are not OK. Continue to explain that "We don't hurt people, and we don't want to see people get hurt." This likely is just a phase. If he continues to have a fascination with violence as he grows older — I'm assuming he's a preschooler — I suggest a mental-health assessment to determine if there are underlying reasons for this behavior. You also should contact your pediatrician for advice.

Yvette

Yvette:

How and when do you begin to speak to your child about sex, safety and abstinence?

Anita

Anita:

The decision of when to discuss sex depends on your child's maturity level. Commonly, 9- or 10-year-olds will begin to have questions. If the child has older siblings, questions may start earlier. The experts at Columbus Children's Hospital suggest you approach the issue like any other health topic, not as something embarrassing or dirty. This will make your child comfortable with the topic, which will help him or her ask open and honest questions. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports sex education that includes information about abstinence and birth control. Research has shown this information doesn't increase a child's level of sexual activity but actually promotes and increases the proper use of birth-control methods among sexually active teens. If you have questions about how to talk with your son or daughter about sex, consult your physician.

Yvette



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.