

WHEN CHILDREN ARE CLEVERER THAN THEIR PARENTS:

Most of us are lazy parents because we believe that our children and teenagers should hear what we say and then just do it. When they do not do what we want we get frustrated and annoyed with their disrespect or defiance. “What is WRONG with them?” we ask ourselves repeatedly.

Last week I wrote about the fact that good communication in a family or relationship takes work. Most of us operate on the assumption that communication should come easy. We expect that if we communicate what we want then people should simply respect that and do as we ask.” It is as simple as that, we argue.

Wrong. If there is anything I have learned in working with couples and families it is that this assumption is probably the most fatal one of all. This would all be true if we were dealing with a robot whose role was simply to comply. When dealing with our children or partners we are faced with another person with its own expectations and needs that often override ours.

Many parents hold steadfastly to this assumption “If my child or teenager does not do what I want then there is something wrong with them.” Clinging to this belief is the cause of many problems. What this lazy or narcissistic parent believes is that *if I have to work at getting my children to comply then there is a real problem*. This parent resents the fact that they should have to give time thought and effort into making a plan for how to deal with their children. They resent the fact that they should have to discipline themselves as parents in order to gain compliance or co-operation. “It should not have to be this hard!” they mutter to themselves as they try to hold their tongue and respond firmly to their child.

The lazy and narcissistic parent believes that they are entitled to respect and compliance by virtue of their status as parent alone. “I am the father and you should do what I say”. How many of us have said that!

The lazy and narcissistic parent gets offended by their children’s natural defiance. Deep deep down, at a real gut level, the lazy parent is convinced that children should just comply and the failure to comply is evidence that there is something wrong with them.

The extreme forms of this are the father who tries to rule with an iron fist and becomes enraged with any child that defies him or the mother who spends her days shouting and roaring at her children. The truth however is that such parenting styles are ultimately impotent because the children gradually discover that the parent has little substance, character, will, or discipline and tries to parent with intimidation or coercion alone. Eventually there is anarchy followed by mutiny.

What’s important is to understand that the children who fight with you about every little thing require that you have a better plan than they do. If they fight you, and you simply fight back, this is not a plan. This is a battle! And you don’t want to get in a battle over everything.

So what's the solution? You have got to have a **better plan**.

A plan for effective parenting is demanding and takes persistence, discipline, and conviction. Your undisciplined child knows this and therefore has a more effective plan than you do. As soon as your children learn this then they begin to take control.

You see, like me, you will believe that because you love your children, because you are a good person, because you care for them deeply, because you are devoted to them, because you want the best for them, because you would die for them that **THEREFORE YOU ARE A GOOD PARENT!** Wrong again! This list of positive traits excludes a few essential ones. You have to be stronger than they are, you have to place a greater value on respect over love, and most importantly you have to be disciplined and persistent in enforcing family rules that demand respect. More than that, you have to be able to attend to the **LITTLE DETAILS** and not just the **LOFTY PRINCIPLES**.

Attending to the **LITTLE DETAILS IS WHERE THE REAL PARENTING HAPPENS**. This is why women are often much more effective parents than men. A father, like myself, might be good on the lofty principles and attitudes expected. He may speak with authority and clarity about how his family should be but may stand like a deer in the headlights when his eight year old finally tells him that he hasn't a clue or be at a complete loss when his teenager gradually begins to just ignore him wandering in late telling him that she did not know what time it was. His blood may boil but he won't have a clue what to do!

This of course happens to women also

Children who are defiant, out-of-control, belligerent, whiny, complaining, or difficult are so because their parents are equally undisciplined and defiant.

How so? B

As a result, it becomes critically important to use the leverage that you do have, and to set up a program that gradually and consistently teaches the children that it makes sense to go to bed, rather than deal with the consequences.

There are three basic rules that we have to comply with