

## The Balance of Love and Limits

Our focus this month in chapel, devotions and the family FX service is ASSERTIVENESS. How do we show love to our children? We are often faced with the question of “Do I” or “Don’t I”? As parents we want to give our children all that is within our power and ability to give, yet it is often in the denying requests that we show our greatest love. I often find myself “family watching” as I go about my life – families in the grocery store, at the book stores, the mall, or other places where families gather. The most interesting of all places to see family dynamics is a place I’m visiting again now that I’m a grandma – Toys-R-Us. Wow!

I remember being the young mother, un-composed as my children fussed. I remember the eyes of the others in line and the feeling that my value and the judgment of the job I was doing was based on the performance of my young children. I didn’t understand then what I know now – that these moments of fussing and fuming are part of growing into the people God has created us to be and that this time will pass. I now understand that it is in modeling appropriate behavior that we teach our children the greatest skills of managing life’s moments.

Today I look at the fits and fusses of children and their haggard parents through the eyes of an older and hopefully wiser person. When I’m in the grocery store aisle and see a parent ASSERTIVELY holding their ground in their “no” response as their children escalate the volume of the request, I find myself smiling, silently congratulating the parents and wishing them well while other patrons frown and tisk-tisk at the overwhelmed parents and children. These parents are setting boundaries, expectations and teaching their children the fine art of delayed gratification and patience. Although this is something our society expects, we often sabotage parent’s efforts with looks of disapproval as parents and children engage in the struggle of growing up and the parenting required to achieve this goal.

Conscious Discipline® offers skills and techniques to accomplish this in ways that teach children to manage their upsets:

- **COMPOSURE:** STAR- Stop/Smile; Take a Deep Breath; And; Relax – When we are centered and COMPOSED, we are better able to help our children find this state of COMPOSURE.
- **CHOICES:** Prior to entering a place where upset is a possibility, tell your child your expectations and offer positive choices of the ways you expect them to behave. Simply telling children what they CAN do often defuses volatile situations.
- **ASSERTIVENESS:** Let your YES be Yes and your NO be NO. Each time we give into the fussing and fuming and move our boundaries, we teach our children that there IS a point at which the intensification of their demands will be met with an “OK, but just THIS time” from a resigned, exhausted and often defeated parent. This teaches them to just “keep it up – eventually she’ll give in”.
- **POSITIVE INTENT:** Just as we do our best as parents, children do their best with the limited skills they have available. Understanding this at the moment of their greatest fits and fussing, breathing and assertively holding our ground will help to defuse the moment.
- **EMPATHY:** Showing empathy for the upset our children experience, no matter how trivial it might seem from our adult perspective is the manner in which we model empathy for others. “You want \_\_\_\_\_. Breathe with me, you can handle this.” This leaves your child with the responsibility of managing their upset and reinforces that they are capable of such action and you have confidence in their ability to deal with their disappointment.
- **CONSEQUENCES:** When our best efforts of setting the moment up for success fail, consequences that are appropriate to the situation and directly related to the event are in order. State these consequences going in, have your child repeat them to you and then follow through!

After time and practice and consistency of outcome, your child will come to understand that mom/dad mean what they say and say what they mean. The short term will still have fussing and fuming but the long term will pay off with children who understand delayed gratification, expectations of behavior and that their parents will follow through and hold boundaries – a very necessary element for raising well adjusted children and contributing members of their families. STOP/SMILE – enjoy them while they are young – they are grown before you know it! Blessings to you and as always...

I wish you well,

*Sharon Stephenson*

Director of Program/Program Coach  
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We are currently enrolling children in our Preschool and Elementary Before/After School programs for the 2012/2013 school year. If you have a child who is two, three or four years old by September 1, 2012, you are age eligible for a spot in one of our loving, nurturing, fun, and exciting classes. If you have elementary children who attend Bauder, Oakhurst, Ridgecrest or Anona Elementary School, we provide transportation and before/after school care as well as in-service days and camps. You can contact us at 593-KIDS and we will be happy to introduce you to our dynamic program and staff. Anona Christian Center is a child development program which leads the community in partnership with families, empowering children to be constructive problem solvers and inspired learners through the application of Conscious Discipline® in a safe and loving Christian environment. We would love to partner with YOUR family!