

PARENTING TIPS

Be Careful How You Handle Your Child's Pain

When children get hurt they need love and compassion. They need to know that they can come to Mom or Dad for comfort. But sometimes parents, in an attempt to show love to their children, end up compensating for the pain by withholding discipline.

When children experience pain or disappointment, they often become self-focused. That can be normal and healthy so that they seek help. However, some children overdo it and become demanding and even hurtful. Parents sometimes don't know how to respond. On the one hand they would normally discipline for this kind of behavior, but on the other hand, they want to be sensitive to the child and not heap on any more pain.

Jimmy doesn't get picked for a project at school and because he is disappointed, he starts treating his mom unkindly. Charissa sprains her ankle in soccer and becomes demanding, ordering people around to serve her. Children in these kinds of situations need comfort but they also need firm discipline to deal with the way they're relating to others.

This reminds me (Joanne) of what happens in the hospital with children who are seriously ill or who have been sick for a long time. Sometimes parents spoil their kids. They say to themselves, "This child has been through so much, I just can't discipline him." And that parent gives and gives, overlooks, overlooks, and the child becomes more and more demanding and unhappy. That's not productive and it contributes to unhappy, unhealthy kids.

Remember that love doesn't just give but it also sets limits so that others can grow. When your child is feeling hurt or disappointed, empathize with, and comfort your child. Comfort is important, but don't allow your child to be demanding or manipulative in the process. Point out the unacceptable behaviors and encourage a more helpful response such as gratefulness and peace.

Today's tip is from the CD series called Single Parenting: Bringing hope and practical help to single, blended, and reconstructed families by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN