

# PARENTING TIPS

## Firmness Doesn't Require Harshness

Knowing how and when to discipline can be a challenge for any parent. We find understanding some basic principles can be helpful. One principle to remember is that firmness doesn't require harshness. Firmness says there's a line here that you cannot cross. Harshness pours emotions intensity into the situation to communicate that you mean business.

Unfortunately, many dads and moms use anger as a way to demonstrate firmness to train their children. But, anger and harshness get in the way of the learning process for kids. In an attempt to build relationship, some parents spend too much time dialoguing about instructions. They try to defend their words, persuade their children to do what they're told, or logically explain the value of obeying. When children remain unresponsive, then parents resort to anger. This is counterproductive.

Children must understand that privilege and responsibility go together. The young person who can't do the right thing when Mom isn't watching may lose the privilege of staying at home alone while Mom runs to the store. The child, who can't do a job and report back but disappears, leaving the job undone, may lose the privilege of going to a friend's house or going to the mall alone.

We need to teach children that if they want to have privileges, they must be willing to abide by the family principles. As often as possible we want to tie those two things together. After all, Jesus said the same thing in a parable to his disciples when he said, "Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities" (Luke 19:17). It's a principle of life, both in the family and out.

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This tip comes from the book, [Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids](#) by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN