

# Six Irrefutable Laws about Kids

Much of the frustration we experience with our children's behavior is caused by a lack of understanding kids. Expanding our thinking about our children and accepting some basic, rudimentary facts will help us change the way we see their behavior and also change our behavior as a parent. We will be much more successful as caregivers if we see the world from our child's point of view. Here are six irrefutable laws about kids that will change the way we use discipline.

## **1. THEY LIVE ONLY IN THE MOMENT**

Whatever the young child happens to be doing at the moment is his entire world. His full attention and focus is on the activity in front of him and he is usually unable to think about anything else unless another activity offers more incentive than the current activity.

### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Establish rules prior to the start of each activity
- Use visual timers to create limits for some activities
- Be patient when moving him from one activity to another
- Point out "what's in it for him" in the next activity

## **2. THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT ORDER AND CLEANLINESS**

It drives us crazy when our child won't pick up her toys when she's finished playing with them, or when she's thirteen and seems perfectly fine living in a bedroom that is in total disarray. Forcing her to clean things up by yelling and punishing doesn't work and can harm our relationship with her.

### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Relax and make cleanup fun
- Demonstrate excitement when it does occur
- Set up agreements prior to the start of an activity
- If the child doesn't follow thru, guide them back silently and respectfully

## **3. THEY GET FRUSTRATED VERY EASILY**

There are a few things that cause children to become frustrated, resulting in tantrums and meltdowns; wanting to be just like us and do what we do, becoming easily overcome by the physical effects of fatigue, hunger, and illness, and a lack of firm and consistent boundaries. When we say, "No cookies before dinner," and then give in, we are actually teaching them to have meltdowns to get us to give in more often.

### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Be patient and help them address what is causing the frustration
- Detach from their emotion and be there with them in silence
- Let them be frustrated without reprimanding or sending them to timeout
- Avoid caving in to their demands to break a boundary or limit

## **4. THEY LEARN BY TESTING OUR BOUNDARIES**

One day when my daughter was a preschooler, I drew a chalk line across the driveway to mark the farthest point she could ride her new tricycle to keep her a safe distance from the street. I explained to her the consequence of breaking this boundary was the loss of her tricycle for the remainder of the day.

With a twinkle in her eye, she crossed the line one day to see what I would do. Immediately, I silently and gently took her tricycle from her and hung it on a hook in the garage. It broke my heart to watch her cry, but she didn't get it back until the following day.

#### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Accept children's testing as normal and not misbehavior
- Set clear and consistent boundaries and keep them in place
- Create consequences that are related to the infraction
- React without emotion and in silence

#### **5. THEY NEED TO FEEL POWERFUL**

Every human strives to feel a sense of power and value within the social unit to which they belong. Employees work more collaboratively when they clearly know what their role is on a work team, athletes perform better when they know what position they play on the sports team, and children become more cooperative when they feel a sense of power in the family or the classroom. A successful leader as a manager, a coach, a parent, or a teacher helps the members of the social unit feel powerful in appropriate ways.

#### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Provide appropriate ways for children to feel powerful
- Allow the child to teach the adult something
- Find creative ways to allow the child to be the boss of something
- Let the child take a turn at being the family meeting facilitator

#### **6. THEY DON'T ALWAYS LIKE THEIR PLAYMATE OR SIBLING**

When a playmate begins to hit another child, it is basically a message to the caregiver that she has had enough of the other child. Because of their egocentric point of view, small children do not naturally like to share and they also see the other child as a threat to the supply of love and attention they receive from the adult caregivers.

#### WHAT ADULTS CAN DO ABOUT THIS

- Avoid putting a child in timeout for hitting or not getting along
- Use modeling to teach small children how to share, not by force
- Be sure that adult relationships around the child demonstrate kindness
- Allow each child to have alone time away from playmates or siblings

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