

END CHILDHOOD SWEARING

Stop bad language without lectures or harsh punishments

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There is a tried and true psychological principle that says, “Notice something you don’t like about your child, show some emotion, and the problem is guaranteed to get worse.” Childhood swearing is a good example.

Nowhere do we see this phenomenon more evident than when parents hear their little cherub utter one of the dreaded four-letter words. Many parents react with a variety of emotions ranging from shock, to out and out adult temper tantrums complete with threats.

A normal child has to witness this parental display with utter fascination.

“Wow. Look at my folks now. I haven’t generated this much household excitement in a long time. I know exactly how to push their buttons. Television can’t compete with this!”

Many people believe some severe punishment for swearing will put an end to it. However, punishment doesn’t work because the parent’s attention is the ultimate reward. Punishment added to parental exasperation is intoxicating for the average kid.

Here are some real-world techniques to end these word battles:

1 Focus on the location of the word instead of the badness of the word. Talk with your kids about situations when these words are and are not acceptable. Consistently react to swearing with, “*Is this the right place for that word? Thank you.*” Some effective parents say, “*How sad. There’s someone in your mirror who enjoys those words. Why don’t you go to your room and have a talk with that person.*”

2 Use the Love and Logic® “Energy Drain” technique. “*Oh, listening to words like that drains my energy. Give me a little while to think of some ways you can put that energy back in me.*” Say these words with the all the appropriate body language of a person who is becoming exhausted. Later say, “*I think if you did some of my housework it might restore some of that energy I lost listening to your swearing. Thanks.*”

This worked for one mom who told me about her 6-year-old son who brought home some bad language from school. She dramatically held her head, sat down, and said, “Energy Drain,” each time he said one of those words. She was unable to do things for him until he had restored her energy by doing some of her chores. His swearing soon faded away.

One day as she was driving him to school another driver cut her off. Before she could catch herself, she blasted the other driver with a few choice four-letter words. The moment those words slipped out, she realized her son was in the back seat hearing every word. As she looked in the rearview mirror, she saw his hand go to his head and heard him say, “Energy Drain.” She was shocked.

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This wise mother stopped the car, looked at her wonderful son, and asked, “Do you think an ice-cream cone would put some energy back in you?” “Maybe,” he sniffed. As they sat in the ice-cream shop he looked at his mom and, with the most drained expression, said, “Mom. You said three bad words. My energy was really drained. I think I’ll feel better after two more ice cream cones.”

Using a few Love and Logic parenting techniques not only helps us raise better kids, but also trains our kids to be better parents when they grow up.

Jim Fay is president and cofounder of the Love and Logic[®] Institute in Golden, Colo., and coauthor of the best-selling book, *Parenting with Love and Logic*. For more information about Love and Logic parenting and teaching techniques, call **1-800-338-4065** or visit www.loveandlogic.com.