

AGES & STAGES **elementary years**

# My Teacher Is Mean

BY DR. CHARLES FAY

**A**s a parent and an educator, there aren't too many things more distressing than hearing a child say, "I can't go to school. My teacher is so mean!"

We don't want to see our children in pain, especially when it's caused by someone we need to trust for their emotional and mental well-being on a daily basis.

So, what can you say or do when your child comes home from school and complains about his or her teacher?

The most important thing to remember is the vast majority of teachers are caring, dedicated and well-trained. Each has his or her own style and kids need to learn how to adapt. Just as kids benefit from teachers who are very warm and patient, they also can learn from some who are more business-like and demanding. Kids can even gain valuable life lessons from a caring teacher who is a bit cranky and cantankerous.

If your child is having trouble adjusting to his or her teacher, here are some easy-to-learn Love and Logic tips to effectively deal with the situation:

**Tip 1: Listen and empathize if your child complains about a teacher.**

When a child says something like, "My teacher is mean. I hate her," what he or she needs most is a loving ear, not lectures, threats, or someone to "fix" the problem. Wise parents respond by asking, "You really don't like her? That must be tough. If any kid is smart enough to find a way to get along with her, it would be you." Be sure to let the child know how much you love him or her and be willing to listen to any concerns.

**Tip 2: Resist the urge to talk badly about your child's teacher or school.**

Regardless of how much we might disagree with our child's teacher or school, it is imperative to send our kids the following message: "Teachers are to be respected and listened to. You may not always agree with what they say or do, but it is NEVER acceptable for you to be disrespectful or disobedient toward them."

Parents who make the mistake of saying negative comments about teachers in front of their children are setting their kids up for academic failure. When parents encourage children to learn how to



positively deal with difficult teachers and stressful situations, their kids learn how to overcome challenges and solve their own problems. In other words, we rob our kids of an important learning opportunity if we allow them to blame teachers for their problems.

**Tip 3: Help your child understand that having a tough teacher is a good thing.**

Smart parents ask their kids, "Why is it good that you have a tough teacher this year?" When their children shrug their shoulders and answer, "I don't know," these parents respond by saying, "You're going to have a chance to learn you can be successful with even the most difficult people. That's one of the most useful skills in life!"

**Tip 4: Remember: By teaching children to get along with a demanding teacher, we also are teaching them how to succeed with a demanding boss.**

Research has shown employees get along with even the most demanding bosses when they:

- Get to work just a bit early every day
- Show up with a smile and a positive attitude
- Listen and follow directions
- Work a bit harder than expected
- Get along well with other employees and customers

Kids who learn these skills at home and at school succeed with the most difficult teachers, get better grades and eventually rise to the top of their chosen occupation.

**Tip 5: Get involved only as a last resort.**

Wise parents intervene on behalf of their children only when it is clear the teacher is so incompetent or negative that even the best behaved and most responsible student would find it impossible to adapt. Fortunately, these types of educators are rare.

When we follow these tips, we give our kids the gift of knowing they can succeed around all different types of people. Unfortunately, some parents steal this wonderful opportunity by trying to make sure their children's teachers are "perfect." Sadly, as adults, many of these children spend their lives being unhappy because other people are "mean" or "unfair."

Don't fall into this trap! Use these Love and Logic tips and give your kids the responsibility and self-confidence they deserve. [wfm](#)



Dr. Charles Fay is a parent, author and consultant to schools, parent groups, and mental health professionals around the world, and President of the Love and Logic Institute in Golden, CO. His video, *Hope for Underachieving Kids*, and his book *Love and Logic Magic When Kids Leave You Speechless*, provide a wealth of ideas for raising kids who are ready to learn and ready for the real world. For more information about Love and Logic parenting and teaching techniques, call 1-800-338-4065.

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