

Please respond! He won't talk to me!

Submitted by Twisha on 1 July, 2005 - 09:16

My two boys are 5 and 6. They, have been having behavior problems at their summer day care center. The six year old in particular has been acting in an inappropriate manner. These problems are escalating. At first he either refused to follow or ignored directions (such as getting out of the pool, etc.) I understand that this is relatively normal, but despite our best efforts his behavior has not improved In fact, it has worsened. He began running away from the group and pulling temper tantrums. We were concerned of course and were working hard to help him understand that one of the natural consequences of misbehaving is that you don't have as much fun. Then he started hitting people. First he got into a fist fight with another child. Another time he tried to knock someone down. The last straw came when he was put in time out (again). He refused, and then HIT AND KICKED THE COUNCILOR. They had to send him home. I told him that he was grounded from TV for two days. He threw a fit. That's not the major problem. After I calmed down I sat down to talk to him. The conversation went like this:

Me: "Devon, why did you kick the councilor?" Him: (reluctantly) "I dunno, I just did". Me: We don't hit other people. Do you know why?" Him: "nooo" Me: "please try and think of a reason OK?" Him:"Ummm because it's bad" Me: But what makes it bad? Him: Because I'm not supposed to. Me: What does it feel like when someone kicks you? Him: I don't like it Me: Why not? Him: because it hurts Me: So how do you think other people feel when you kick them? Him: *shrug* Me: Do you think that they like it? Him: *shakes head* Me: Right. They don't like it. It hurts to get kicked, right? Him: *nods* Me: So we don't kick people OK? Him: *nods reluctantly* Me: Why do we not kick people? Him: Ummm...because I'm not supposed to. I wanted to tear my hair out.

Later I tried a different approach. I asked him to describe his normal day. Not only did I want to get a clearer picture of what had lead up to the incident I honestly wanted to know how he spent his day.

Me: "So, what do you do at day camp?" Him: Ummmmm... Me: "Well, what is the first thing you do when you get there?" Him: play basketball... (With some coaching "and then what do you do?" I got a pretty good grasp of his schedule.) Me: So what happened today? Him: Nothing... Me: Your teacher told me that you were in time out. Him: Uh-uh! Me: You weren't in time out? Him: Well, you see I didn't get to go swimming because I threw my towel in the pool. People who don't get to go swimming have to play on the grass. Me: So you played on the grass? Him: No...Yes! Me: He also told me that you kicked him. When did you kick him? When you were playing on the grass? Him: No, I was in time out. Me: I thought you said that you weren't in time out? Him: *No answer* Me: so what did the councilor do before you kicked him? Him: *Shrug* Me: did he put you in time out? Him: yeah... Me: Why? Him: I just did Me: were you angry? Him: yeah Me: what were you angry at? Him: You see, the other day we went finger painting and I painted a plate and then we went to lunch and I went back to get my drink from snack but I swam to get it and then Ewan started crying and...etc... Me: This happened today? him: No, the OTHER day. Me: so what happened today? Him: Nothing. I was good today. Me: You're telling me that you were perfectly good today *?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!* Him: *Happily* Yup! *Pause* Can I watch TV? Me: no, you're grounded. Him: But I want to watch TV! *Tantrum*

What do I do? What can I do? He won't tell me the truth, he tries to hide it. I guess he thinks that it will make me more mad at him. I try to explain that it won't make me mad but it will help me to help him feel better and won't want to kick

people anymore. He's like "Yes ma'am" and nothing changes.

My boy is hurting. He's hurting others and hurting himself, but I can't figure out why! All I can do is punish him, but that doesn't solve the problem. It's as if he's actively TRYING not to understand and he shows no interest in solving the problem whatsoever. I hug him and tell him that I love him very much and that I miss playing with him. Unfortunately I have to ground him because he can't behave. Lets try to think of things that will help you...and he changes the subject.

This post is already too long, but I don't know what else to do. He's going to a Psychologist on Wednesday to get tested for stuff like ADD and Depression, but what can I do in the meantime? We're both miserable, and I don't know how long I can take that.

Please, Help!

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Please respond

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 3 July, 2005 - 01:39

I'm thinking maybe the first question ought to be "do you want to go to daycare?" and if not, make better plans. They might prefer to hang out and do fun things with you.

Sorry I only skimmed the rest of the post as I found much of the content too disturbing. I don't think punishment is a good response. Ever.

There's nothing wrong WITH your child, but there seems to be something very wrong FOR him. You don't need to have him articulate exactly what that is before you begin offering better options.

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just one observation

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 7 July, 2005 - 12:12

Punishment is not really the answer here (or anywhere). Communication might be.

But, from what you describe, you are not communicating with your son. You are talking at him, with a pre-determined script in mind. Your second attempt with a "different approach" was really just more of the same, but with a different script.

And, you seem frustrated because he is not following your scripts. He's not "answering" the questions you want him to answer in a format you want him to use, with a content you want him to provide.

Yet, in the second conversation you describe, at one point it looks like he was starting to open up and talk about what happened at camp, but you cut him off and re-directed him to your script. You may very well have cut him off before he got to the reason why he is acting out.

It may be that he doesn't know exactly why... or at least hasn't made the connection between this and that for himself. Or perhaps he needs to feel you will listen to everything he needs to say before he opens up. Or perhaps he needs to talk in circles around what's really bothering him a while before he can talk about what is really bothering him...

Throw out the scripts. Talk to him, and, more importantly, listen to what HE wants to tell you. If he starts talking, let him lead the conversation where it needs to go. You're just along for the conversation ride. LISTEN to him. With NO pre-determined ideas about what he "should" say or what topics he "should" want to discuss.

THROW OUT THE SCRIPTS.

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With all due respect, i

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 21 January, 2006 - 21:30

With all due respect, i think this boy sounds utterly bored and fed up. What type of relationship does he have with his father? What activities do they get up to together? I think generally, young boys get into these sort of ruts because their lives lack running wild, running ragged, kicking about, getting dirty and good chunks of wide-eyed, open-spaced anarchy with Dad & Co. What does he get instead? 'daycare', 'sitting and talking with mum', 'no TV', 'grounded', 'counselling' - I would find that timetable totally despairing too. Give him to Dad, throw away the domestic 'rulebook' and don't let them in the house until they are muddy, exhausted and full of tales of adventure!

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The problem here isnt the

Submitted by Atina (not verified) on 17 June, 2008 - 22:22

The problem here isnt the child, it's honestly you. I don't believe that harsh punishment is the answer but punishment is needed. Children have to know whos boss in the house thats point blank. If you have tried talking to him in a nice way, trying to explain the reasons why he shouldn't kick people and it doesnt work, then the next step is telling him that HE CANNOT HIT, KICK, OR SAY THINGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE FEEL BAD!!! THATS IT! You are the mother, you set the rules, if you say no its no! Make sure you take everything he likes away, everthing! I know it's hard but believe me once he understands how it works when he disobeys you he will start to change. Trust me! enough with the nice mommy "and the Oh punishment isnt the answer", YES IT IS! Try it and you'll see that he will get the mpoint and stop. Right now all he's doing is for attention because he knows you'll sit and talk to him but besides that he will get his way, even if you take TV away he most likely know that he'll get to see tv soon enough.

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Take a breath

Submitted by Jules on 27 July, 2008 - 14:02

I have read the responses to your post, some I agree with... the final one I really do not agree with, punishment really isn't the answer, getting tougher and tougher is going to take you further and further from a good relationship with your son. My advice, stop and take a breath! Sit yourself down and look at it. You know your son better than anyone does, would he behave like this with no reason? children may seem irrational sometimes, but only when we view them with adult eyes. What is happening here is you are head to head with him, feeling frustrated and angry because he doesn't respond to your adult reasoning, in my experience, when I have been in similar situation, its nearly always because I am missing some vital piece of information, or I am not seeing answers that are there if I had only looked.

So be the grown up and stand down. Let go of the punishment. Can you take him out of the daycare for a while? are there any other options available? Think before you respond, be creative, try to find ways to remove this stress from you sons (and your own) life. It doesn't matter so much why this situation isn't working, what matters is that it clearly isn't. You mention both your sons having problems, yet you focus then on your six year old, is there a way you could talk to your other child about what its like at the center? What matters here is your children, not what the day care staff think, not even what the counsellor thinks. So Stop! Step Back! Take a Breath! and for goodness sake Take Another Look!

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Keep Trying

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 7 June, 2009 - 23:42

Maybe 'punishment' is too a harsh word, and that's why people are freaking out here, but make no mistake, he needs to know there are ALWAYS consequences to his actions!! He is going to be bored sometimes, he going to be unhappy at school sometimes- that's life. He needs to understand that he doesn't always get to do what he wants to do- especially if it harms other people. I think you are on the right track. Talking to him- you now understand that he maybe doesn't get why he shouldn't kick or hit people- maybe this is something you need to remind him of more often. If you see something, like other kids fighting, or something on TV use it as an example to remind him 'that hurts people! we don't do that because it's not nice'

And no, I certainly do not think this is your "fault". I do not think you are contributing to the problem. I do see that you have not found the answer, but I'm sure you're not alone on that one, dear.

It is possible that maybe this particular daycare is not conducive to your children. Socialization is important, but kids transfer schools sometimes, it's not that big of a deal.

Just remember, that your child is learning most things for the first time. Your job is to make sure that he becomes a model citizen, that, *in the long run* he is happy and productive. If you sometimes need to take away TV, or have a sit-down with him to go over the basics again, so be it.

In the end, just keep trying, stick with what works, trash what doesn't, and don't give up.

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i know how you feel

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 27 April, 2010 - 10:26

my son stopped talking to me about two years ago, we have the same pointless circles of conversation too. and its incredibly difficult to find a solution to your child's problem when you are faced with no facts or opinions, i've yet to find out what is going on for my son although i strongly suspect bullying at school but its not always easy when you can't say who or what has happened. people need to understand that this mother is probably doing her very best actually to help her kids to have open lines of communication, and when your child is hurting its highly distressing and extremely destructive for them and us. I have done everything and now am maybe just thinking that it may be easier for my son to talk to a third party. this mother has set up counselling for her son and that's very sensible. sometimes we aren't the answer. as for getting some fresh air and running about that's very nice and has its own benefits but will not solve lack of articulation or deep rooted issues, hate to disappoint. hope you find some solace for your son, and i for mine.

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I think things can always be

Submitted by daniahancolm on 9 April, 2011 - 01:13

I think things can always be handled without violence. It is obviously easier to just hit your kid and show them it's wrong, but then they'll just like you less and they won't learn from it. Inflicting pain on a child to 'discipline' them is disgusting. Punishment only provokes fear in children. I remember when I was a kid, it was the worst feeling ever and it didn't teach me a lesson as much as it did make me not like my parents.

Note that "instead of thinking you must control your child's behavior, help your child learn to control himself. Set limits, give reminders, be his advocate..

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Please respond

Submitted by Rosalyn on 14 January, 2012 - 03:56

Oh boy, don't I know how you feel. I've been trying to work out what is making my son so out of control. He's 8. I have tried all sorts of therapies, chiropractor, bower therapy, kinesiology, etc. All seemed to help a bit for a little while, but none stuck for long. I have actually just found this site and posted a thing on additives in food making me angry. I finally went to a pediatrician and he has put him on anti seizure medication. It is absolutely fantastic, except for the colour coating. It makes him nuts. Exactly what your saying with your son. Blank, like he's being ignorant or something, he's aggressive and mean when he's had additives. I feel there is a point where children do need to be punished, but punishment doesn't work for my son when he's reacting to additives. I shut all the kids inside this morning and shut him outside after he had shut his 6 yr brother in the shed then few minutes later pushed his 4 yr old sister into the prickles. I am now trying to see if I can remove the coating to get rid of the colour on his pill and see if that helps. The book that I have for the additives is "Additive Alert" by Julie Eady if you are at all interested. It is hard at first to cut additives out, but well worth it. I now have mine on a additive, gluten, dairy free diet. Wheat makes my daughter really nasty too. I'd suggest a food diary, see how much of what they are eating. It could also be a lot of other things too, but I hope this helps. Ha ha, my post is long winded too, like yours. I feel for you, and it's nice that someone else out there is desperate with dealing with similar issues.

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