

What are your real expectations?



You see your child's mistakes, flaws, shortcomings and it frustrates you, it makes you upset that they still 'don't get it', you are concerned because of their past, frustrated because of their present and afraid of their future...

Today we will focus on how to deal with the difficulties on the day to day and your expectations.

When something happens at home, we're quick to find someone to blame or punish, and if you have noticed, we all have that tendency of blaming someone or something else. We don't like to feel the pain of the responsibility, because that makes us have to face the consequences. It is the same with our children. They immediately want to defend themselves, so they lie, hide, run or get angry, and we do so as well.

One aspect of life that you can influence, is how you react to their mistakes, excuses and wrongdoings.

How do you feel when they do something you particularly don't like?

- do you get angry quickly?
- do you feel upset or like crying?
- do you want to punish or yell?
- do you feel like leaving?

All these emotions, are the same no matter how old you are, the difference is we, as adults, should teach the children and teenagers how to handle them. But sometimes we didn't learn, so we don't know how to do it.

We cannot be yelling and at the same time say "stop yelling!", we cannot expect them to always be kind and gentle when we're not, we cannot expect them to apologize when we rarely apologize to them or to each other, and we cannot expect them to always have a right attitude when there's a lot of confusion, fear, disappointment or anger inside them.

So, what are your expectations?

Do you expect your child to always regulate his or her emotions and do so quickly?
Do you expect them to always sit properly, wait for their turn and be patient?
Do you expect them to do everything when and how you tell them to?
Do you expect your children to always speak with the right tone and attitude?

Reality Check

Children that haven't gone through difficult trauma, separations from caregivers or abuse, tend to start to develop emotional self regulation around 4 years old, that means, before that, you can expect that sometimes they get what you say, and sometimes they won't and eventually they will be able to better regulate themselves. But take note that if they're tired, hungry, feel scared or frustrated, they won't be able to self-regulate and will need you to help them out.

But, if your child didn't grow up in a healthy and safe environment from conception, you should expect that their emotional skills, or self regulation system takes longer to develop, even if the environment, brain development, stimulation, etc. are functioning well. That means, it's us that need to adjust our expectations, if you've tried many things, and you have been consistent over time, and they still struggle, maybe you need to adjust your expectations to what they can do now, with the hopes that later on they will improve.

If you didn't learn how to do that, today is the day. The only thing you have to do is to be aware of what you are experiencing inside, whether it's frustration, anger or sadness and choose what to do with it. Your child or teenager cannot be the target of your feelings, we must learn to acknowledge and deal with them in a healthy way.

You can say something like:

I'm feeling angry right now, I don't like what you did, but that's doesn't change the fact that I love you. I apologize for yelling. Next time I will try to be more calm and you can listen and obey the first time

But also, search inside, what is it that made you feel angry? what were your expectations? are they realistic?

Remember, learning new habits, and ways of thinking and responding, takes time. Some researchers say that it takes between 21 and 63 days to form a new habit, and hundreds of repetitions. So if your child is not listening the first time, you must choose to be patient and say: what was your job? or what was your responsibility? ok now it's time to do it. Give them a minute or two to process the information and let them do it, if you see they need help, guide them through it.

If your child made a mistake, making them feel bad about it won't help them, it will only frustrate them and you. Be kind and encouraging. Listen first, observe and then respond. Do not assume things because of what you've lived in the past.

If you see they are getting upset, acknowledge it:

- I know you don't like this, but it's your responsibility, if you want to, we can do it together this time.
- I can see that you're feeling upset because you didn't get what you wanted. I understand.

Also, learn to take care of yourself. To take a time out if you need it and then come back. Work out, spend some time outdoors, read, eat healthy, stay hydrated, rest, laugh, and let go!

What does the Word say?

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

Romans 3:23-24

We all fall short, we all make mistakes, and we all sin. Let us take advantage of our reality, and show our children how, when we confess, repent and receive the gift God gave us in His son, who paid for our penalties, we can move from shame to confidence, from fear to peace, from darkness into light.

Let us foster a place of security, of grace and forgiveness, and let us teach them what repentance truly is, with our lives:

METANOIA in greek is the word used for repentance and literally means to change your mind for the better, which translates into an action.

The best teacher is He who teaches with the example. Let us be that kind of teacher. And see the heart behind the action. As we need grace and forgiveness every day, hour and minute, so do they. And just as God sent His Holy Spirit to be with us to teach, help and guide us, so our children need that constant companion, that doesn't condemn but convicts and guides us to Truth and Life.

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