

## When Values Collide ...

Well, this is it.. the last parenting article in the set and we've left the hardest to the last moment. You can now listen to your child when they have a problem, you can deliver an effective I-message when you have a problem, you can understand the cause of all behaviours and you can shift gears from listening, to asserting, to identify the needs behind a problem and finally to problem solve it. So you have achieved a lot!

We are dealing with Values this week and it is one of the toughest challenges we all make in dealing with children and also other peoples behaviour. What is a value though? A value is what is important to you and it can be as tangible as money or as intangible as honesty. Values are beliefs and ideals, they are not behaviours.

Why do values cause problems? Well they don't, that's until they are in conflict with another person's and you want that other to share your same value. Many parents and children share many values as a result of parental modelling and teaching and by sharing a common culture and community. But often differences do emerge, especially as the child enters into teenage years and young adulthood. This is the time when conflicts arise over the child's choices of friends, clothing, appearance, food and drinking habits, political and religious views, and sexual, moral and ethical views. Their choices may not have a tangible effect on you as such (i.e. the way they dress does not physically put you out or cost you more money) but they have a strong emotional effect because they conflict with what you feel is right.

So how do you handle it ? (I know you're wondering!) Well you could resort to threats and power and suffer the consequences of the damage to the relationship. However, as one who has seen the result of this approach many times over in my own family and in the practice of family counselling, I wouldn't recommend this approach as the first line of attack. The damage can be long lasting to both sides. Children can also really dig their heels in too, if the parent uses threats and power and many times the child will continue to do the behaviour behind the parents backs anyway. It is natural for a child to seek independence, feel more separated and in control of their own decisions as they enter into adolescence. This is a natural part of growth into adulthood. We as parents, sometimes have a very difficult time during this transition, accepting this separation, and can actually revert to using power more to gain back what we can never have again. Instead of going

*"If we do not teach our children, society will. And they, and we, will live with the results"*

*Steven R Covey*



## Pro-active Powerful Parenting

through this struggle, you can transition into a much more empowering, relaxed and loving relationship and use this base to influence your child's values. Positive pro-active parenting means to be prepared, use the "no problem" (family) time to discuss and explore values and the challenges of growing up (peer pressure, swearing, clothing etc) and head off many problems this way.

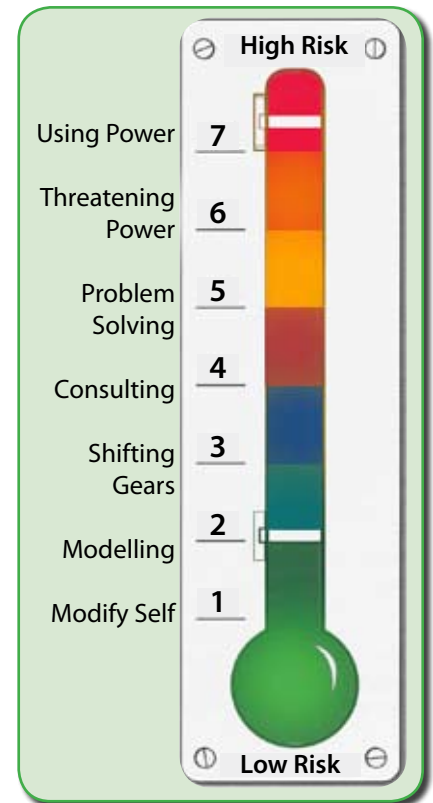
When values collide, and they will, then we first need to assess at what level of risk to the relationship does this value and my reaction to it require? We've shown you 7 ways (the temperature gauge to the right) and you can see that you already have many of the skills to address the conflict but some of these may be new to you.

Consulting means to influence your child's values through a conversation. It requires that you share your concern (I-msg) and make a 2 way conversation around it. It also requires that you be prepared - you know the "facts" (and not just your beliefs about it) and can talk rationally about it. This doesn't mean scare tactics either as children (especially teens) will quickly tune out of the conversation. Consulting also requires that you leave the responsibility for the change with the child and have the patience and allow time for the change to integrate.

Modelling is the most successful way to share your values. As I heard in the media the other day "You always have trouble getting your children to listen to you but they have no trouble copying what you do!" And it really can't be made any more clearer than that. If you do not want your children to behave in a particular way, then you must also hold up that value. My father always told me how bad smoking was and yet he smoked. When I grew into a teenager, I started smoking! Even when I finally gave up for good, it was too late as my son had seen me smoke for 7 years of his life. He consequently picked up smoking when he turned 18, despite saying he was never going to smoke when he was little.

On the flip side of that, my father had had strong beliefs about listening and discussing problems and that has greatly influenced how I communicate today as it has also for my children.

Children look to their parents for examples of what's "right" and "wrong", "successful" and "satisfying". These values are subjective to all families, cultures, communities and even countries! If you demonstrate and live by what you value and avoid hypocrisy as much as possible, then the modelling process will help you when it comes to dealing with values issues.



## Pro-active Powerful Parenting

If children like the way you talk to them and treat them (no double standards) then they will listen to what you have to say.

Just be aware, it is not realistic to expect your brand new modelling to abruptly change your child's copied behaviour. You need to start early or if you're a bit late in the game, discuss it openly with your child about why you're making the change and allow them to decide if they will change too. Gentle influencing and modelling supports and strengthens relationships. With all change, patience is required.

There are further specific ways to deal with values conflicts (and also understanding values and where they come from), that I would have liked to share with you however, you'll need to come and see me or do the pro-active parenting course.



So your LAST Homeplay is think about your values (what's important to you) and discuss these with your family. Explore the values that you'd like your children to share with you, explore what they mean to you and allow each person to say what they mean to them too. Lastly, consider coming to a Pro-Active Parenting Course to learn about values conflict and for previous skills (over the last 5 articles) and for all the other areas I have not been able to cover. After all, the investment in yourself, your family and your relationships is worth it.

Vanessa Lewis

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