

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

The Magic Combination: 1-on-1 And 1-2-3

(NAPSA)—Raising children today is no easy task. Kids certainly don't come with a "How-to-Raise-Me" training manual. If you are having more than your share of behavioral problems with your youngsters, just how should you go about turning things around?

The answer, according to clinical child psychologist, Dr. Thomas W. Phelan, author of the popular *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*, may surprise you.

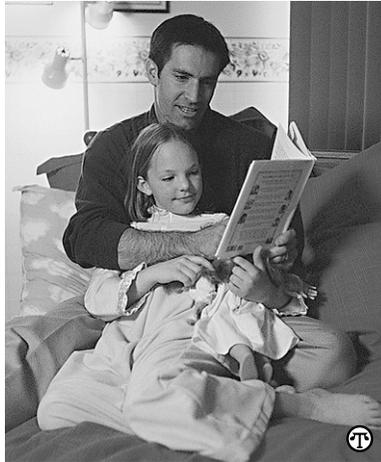
"Sometimes the simplest solutions are the most effective," says Phelan. "The two most effective things you can do with your youngsters to get things going right are (1) shared one-on-one fun and (2) using a method known as "counting" for obnoxious behavior. The first technique will help you feel more affectionate; the second will help you feel less angry."

One-on-one fun.

Brace yourself for the bad news. "Family togetherness is overrated," says Dr. Phelan. "Going out with the whole crew is not all it's cracked up to be. One of the main reasons is sibling rivalry."

Mom and Dad are at the beach, for instance, with their eight-year-old daughter and six-year-old son. The adults are trying to enjoy the sand, the water and the kids' interaction.

But the boy says something smart to his sister who throws her hot dog at her brother who laughs as the Weiner misses him and gets all full of sand. Now both kids are screaming and everyone is looking.



One-on-one time can help strengthen the bond between parent and child.

This isn't fun. The solution? "As I explain in *1-2-3 Magic*," says Dr. Phelan, "it's important to take your kids—one at a time—and do something you both like. Regularly. It's peaceful because there's no fighting and not even a chance of fighting. That makes for real enjoyment and genuine mutual affection."

Shared one-on-one fun produces strong parent-child bonding, and the activity can be very simple, such as reading, going shopping, just talking or—heaven forbid!—teaching the inexperienced parent how to play a video game.

Counting obnoxious behavior.

You say you can't have fun with your kid because he acts like a little monster too much of the time? Well it's time to do something about it, says Dr. Phelan. Start

counting obnoxious behavior, such as arguing, whining, fighting and tantrums. Think about it: How long does it take a child to stop an aggravating behavior? The answer is one second. So how do you motivate a misbehaving child to produce this one second worth of cooperation? You count.

"Believe it or not," says Phelan, "a simple warning, such as 'That's 1,' will usually do the trick. If the child gets to '3' there is a consequence. Period. No arguing, yelling, spanking. No belated promises or apologies. Repeat as necessary."

When they hear this advice, some parents think, "Yeah, right. I've tried counting and warnings. My kids are immune to it." According to Dr. Phelan, these parents totally miss the point. "The magic is not in the counting," he says. "The crux of the matter is in Mom or Dad keeping quiet after the warning has been given. 'That's 1. How many times do I have to tell you? Look at me when I'm talking to you! Were you put on this earth to drive me nuts!?' is not counting. What your kids are immune to is not the warnings; it's all your chatter."

Kids giving you a hard time? For starters, this doctor's prescription is regular doses of one-on-one fun and counting. These two strategies go a long way toward producing kids who listen and children you can enjoy.

To find the *1-2-3 Magic* book, video or audio, call (800) 442-4453, check out www.thomasphelan.com, or visit your local bookstore.