

Pointers For Parents

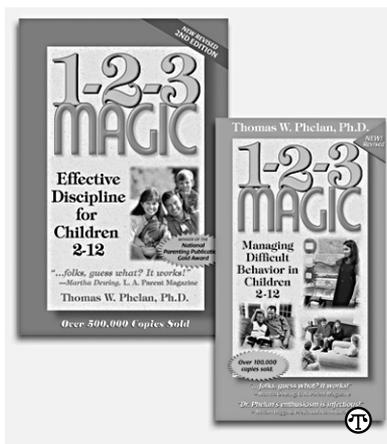
Help In Avoiding The Talk-Persuade-Argue-Yell-Hit Syndrome

(NAPSA)—Even though they may not admit it, many adults enter parenthood and teaching with visions of picture-perfect children. They imagine a warm and loving home, or an orderly and quiet classroom, peopled by respectful and polite kids, all eagerly doing whatever is asked with only an occasional reminder. These grown-ups assume (and hope) that kids are just smaller versions of adults: reasonable and unselfish. Life would certainly be a lot easier if children did possess these traits right from the beginning!

This wish is what clinical psychologist Dr. Thomas W. Phelan calls the “Little Adult Assumption.” Veteran parents and educators know the Little Adult Assumption is not reality. Children are not automatically born sensible, charitable and cooperative.

Moms, dads and teachers who embrace the little adult myth, however, prefer the “modern method” of discipline, talking and reasoning. These adults treat children like small computers: Lack of cooperation from a child must indicate a lack of information in the child’s brain. Pour in more data and the problem will be fixed.

Unfortunately, words and reason alone are not enough to manage children’s behavior. Explanations are certainly necessary at times. But children are not little computers; they learn not just through explanation and insight, but also through modeling, limit setting, reinforcement and practice. Unlike computers, children have feelings, such as anger or



A GENTLE-BUT-FIRM ALTERNATIVE—Parents are finding help in disciplining their children from a popular parenting book and video program.

pride, which must be taken into account. Sensitivity on the part of adults, as well as just plain time, are necessary.

Followers of the Little Adult Assumption, though, run into predictable difficulties. One of these is what Dr. Phelan calls the Talk-Persuade-Argue-Yell-Hit Syndrome. Ironically, this sometimes tragic sequence results from the best of grown-up intentions. A child is doing something you don’t like. You ask her to stop, and explain why she should. She continues her misbehavior, though, so you try persuading her to see things your way. Persuasion fails and you start arguing. When arguing doesn’t work, you yell. Yelling fails, so feeling there is nothing left to do, some people

begin hitting.

The Little Adult Assumption is the major cause of child abuse.

Tantrums and excessive talking by parents and teachers are also destructive for other reasons. First, they move the focus off of the child’s misbehavior and onto the adult’s outburst. Second, many kids take the eruption of a grown-up as a challenge to fight, and there are plenty of kids who love a good fight. Third, adults who give four or five reasons to a child to prompt good behavior are really saying, “You don’t have to behave unless I can give you several good reasons why.” This is not discipline, it is begging. Shrewd-enough children will simply take issue with the reasons.

Fortunately there is a gentle-but-firm alternative. *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*, Dr. Phelan’s popular parenting book and video program, provides easy-to-learn methods that break the cycle of talking, persuading, arguing, yelling and, in some families, hitting. Surprisingly, through *1-2-3 Magic* parents learn how their silence can speak louder than their words.

Over 700,000 *1-2-3 Magic* books and videos have been sold (Spanish versions are also available). Dr. Phelan has been in practice for over 25 years, is nationally recognized as an expert on discipline and Attention Deficit Disorder, and appears frequently on radio and TV. *1-2-3 Magic* is available at bookstores, by calling 1-800-442-4453 or visiting the Web site at www.thomasphelan.com.