

5 Mistakes (even) Connected Parents Make

By Bonnie Harris

Parents are attracted to Connective Parenting because it makes sense. Its foundation is in relationship. Its approach is raising truly responsible, respectful human beings without punishment or blame. As with all endeavors, connected parents make mistakes. Here are the top 5:

1. Not being firm enough

Many connected parents tend to put their children's needs and wants above their own—sometimes in reaction to their own childhoods, sometimes because they fear their child's meltdowns, unhappiness and disappointment. Being “too nice” means losing your power. Your needs are no more or no less important than your child's. Balance is key.

2. Assuming empathy will change your child's behavior

“But I said all the right things and he still kept on!” When you expect connective communication to change your child, it becomes manipulative and no longer genuine. Responding calmly, firmly, respectfully, and with no blame means you are modeling appropriate behavior and you are in control. This is why you do it—not to get your child to do what you want. The byproduct is that your child feels understood and safe. From that place he may feel freer to let it all out. Then his behavior will normalize.

3. Believing your child's behavior is your responsibility

Does this sound like your fundamental job description? Taking responsibility for your child's behavior, means you have to fix it. It is your child's job to fix his problems. It is your job to help him to do so with a problem solving approach. When you take the job on, your emotions get hooked in, you try to control, and cannot be helpful. Her behavior becomes a reflection of your parenting.

4. Thinking you must teach a lesson in the moment of disruption

When chaos hits and your button has been pushed, you assume you have to yell and punish now or your child will never learn. Nothing effective happens in the heat of the moment. Wait until all emotions have calmed before talking about it with your child. He will be far more receptive to learning and making amends when he is calm. So will you.

5. Getting stuck in old patterns of criticism, blame, and punishment.

From the looks of your spouse, in-laws, and friends, it's all too easy to allow those doubts back in and fall into old traps. Find someone who can support you and talk regularly. You will only reap the benefits of Connective Parenting when you can stay relatively consistent. And remember no one is perfect.

Tips for staying on the Connective Track:

- **Be mindful** – Pay attention to your reactions. Don't go on automatic pilot. Stop and ask yourself:
 - How important is it that I say yes or no?
 - Is my button getting pushed? If so, take 2 minutes to breathe.
 - Is this my problem or my child's? Am I owning my problem or dumping it on my child?
 - Use the mantra, This is how it is right now. It will pass.
- **Remember your child is having a problem, not being a problem.**
- **Own your power.** Your personal power is just as important as your child's.
- **Give yourself a break,** we all make mistakes. Who wants a perfect parent!
- **Repair broken connections.** Don't be afraid of bringing a situation up again. Be honest and humble without putting yourself down. Suggest a "do-over".
- **Say the "Of Course" mantra** – Of course she wants to stay up late, Of course he doesn't want to stop having fun, etc.

Connective Parenting is a process. It takes a long time to embody a new way of perceiving your children and their behavior. It may take as much time for your child to trust your new approach as it did for him to learn from your old. The goal is relationship. Your child will learn far more from how you are together than from any lesson you have to teach.

Bonnie is the director of Connective Parenting www.connectiveparenting.com and is available for speaking events, phone counseling, and parenting workshops. She has authored two books, "When Your Kids Push Your Buttons" and "Confident Parents, Remarkable Kids". You can follow her work through her newsletter and on facebook or contact her by emailing bh@bonnieharris.com.

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