

## Four Parenting Resolutions for the New Year

Many of you may know that I traveled to Lebanon, PA this past October to conduct my parenting lecture on handling power struggles. Many thanks go to Sharon and Marsha and their staff at Kochenderfer Christian Day Care for the warm welcome and great turnout. What a beautiful part of the country you all live in and I hope to return soon. If you were unable to attend, you can now hear my power struggle lecture on CD, available on my Web site or on Amazon.com.

At the conclusion of the lecture in Lebanon, a young lady approached me and commented on the fact that she now had so many more parenting tools that were new to her, but she wasn't sure how to go about implementing them without creating excessive chaos in the family. Her primary fear was not knowing how to handle the resistance her children would demonstrate at the changes she wanted to put in place. She admitted that they should have been in place a long time ago if she'd had the knowledge and wisdom to know how to do it. I let her know that it is never too late to make positive changes at home and the key to her success will be her patience and calmness as she puts them in place.

Creating change with discipline and limits, especially ones that are new to you, can be overwhelming and daunting. The New Year is a good time to implement some of these changes and to take them one at a time. Start by accepting the fact that your kids aren't going to like the changes you make and be ready for them to resist. Relax and avoid defending yourself. They may try and draw you into an argument to wear you down and to get you to give up your position on the new limits, but be strong and don't let them succeed. Take some time to jot down some notes on a plan for your changes and then schedule a family meeting to discuss them. Here are four suggestions for discipline changes for the New Year.

**Family Meetings.** If you're not holding them, start now. A primary factor that causes children to act out and misbehave is feeling that they don't belong or have a place in the family. Set up a regular weekly schedule or hold one every other week and keep them short. The children will know when to expect them and may actually look forward to them. There are many good books on the market to help you with agendas and the content. The most important thing you can do is commit to not answering the phone or the door during these meetings. It will send a message to the children that they and your time with them are more important than anything else.

**Introduce Cooperation.** When I was raising my own children, one of the activities I selected for a family meeting was to get them to help me build two lists: one list of all the things I was required by law to provide them with and the other, a list of things that were optional that I labeled as cooperation. The "required by law" list included things like food, shelter, healthcare, clothing, supplies for school, etc. The "optional" list included things such as use of the home telephone, television, video games, computer time, specialized clothing, time with friends, etc. I told my children that there will be times when I need their cooperation and times when they will need mine. The way it would work is that when I got their cooperation for things, I would be more inclined to cooperate with them by providing more of the things from the "optional" list. This is not bribery, it simply teaches children that some things we do for them are privileges and they will get more of these things if we get their cooperation; one hand washes the other, as it has been said.

Cell Phones. This one is likely to trigger some strong opinions but I welcome any feedback from my readers, positive or negative. I don't support children having cell phones until around the age of 16. A leading responsibility of effective parents is their ability to monitor their children's activities and to know who they are interacting with, and this cannot be done when they have free reign to call or text whoever they want and whenever they want to do it. Cyber-bullying is on the rise and it occurs when anyone can have access to your children through computer instant messaging or cell phones. If you really feel that your child needs the phone to get in touch with you for safety reasons, then control the use of it by providing it for them when they are going to be away from you and then have them turn it in when they return to your care.

Limited Entertainment Electronics Time. Playing with the computer, video games, or watching movies and television for entertainment purposes should be limited and monitored. The longer a child is allowed unlimited access to the video screen for non-academic purposes, the more they are influenced by the messages embedded in what they are watching. It also means less opportunities they have to use their creativity and the talents they have inside of them waiting to be discovered. I recommend that a child have up to one hour of entertainment electronics time each weekday and no more than two hours on holidays and weekends. Visual timers help in managing this activity.

If you attended my lecture in Lebanon, you may remember a phrase I had up on the screen: "rules without relationship result in rebellion." This means, before you run off to set up these or any new limits and boundaries, be sure that you have taken the time and made the effort to have good relationships with your children. It is the relationship that will be the foundation for any good parenting plan.

*Bill Corbett is the author of the book "Love, Limits, & Lessons: A Parent's Guide to Raising Cooperative Kids" in English and in Spanish, and the founder and president of Cooperative Kids. He has three grown children, two grandchildren, and lives with his wife Elizabeth near Hartford, Connecticut. You can visit his Web site [www.CooperativeKids.com](http://www.CooperativeKids.com) for further information and parenting advice.*