

Cut It Out – Be NICE!

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Being “nice” isn’t usually a great personal goal whether it is in our role as parent, partner, colleague or friend. It’s confusing because we were taught to be nice growing up. Yet nice is often about people pleasing, having poor boundaries and *acting* a certain way rather than *being* a certain way. If your goal as a parent is to be “nice”, you really need to CUT IT OUT! Your kids need to see a level of confidence and clarity in you. Considering your child’s needs, your needs and the needs of others makes a good basis for healthy boundaries. This approach is kind and won’t have you falling into the pit of resentment and guilt.

So, let’s come up with a new definition for the word NICE:

N = Negotiate a limit so there won’t be confusion and talk about expectations ahead of time when possible. Bring everybody in on the discussion that is affected by the limit. Find some middle ground that you can all live with. For young kids simple choices can be a form of negotiating.

I = Insist that once a limit has been established that is reasonable, the boundary is respected. Sometimes when limits are new with our kids, we need to have a period of time of maintaining that boundary and being consistent, otherwise the limit disappears and confusion sets in. Consistency with important limits really matters.

C – Consequences enforce boundaries. Parents often use logical consequences with their children when it comes to issues of safety and respect for others. If a limit and consequence has been discussed ahead of time, simply follow through without anger or threats. “You agreed to wear a helmet but now I see you riding without one. It looks like your bike will be put away for a couple of days.” Allow your child to experience appropriate natural consequences; they are the rules of life. If they are old enough to take on a responsibility, don’t rescue, nag or get into power struggles. Over-parenting interferes with natural consequences so pull back!

E – Exit the power struggle. Rambling on with lectures and moral values doesn’t teach kids. When you stay locked into arguments, you simply take back responsibility. Stop talking and let the actions teach your child. Empathy and support should be present at all times. “I know you are disappointed that you can’t ride your bike.” or “It sounds like you were embarrassed today when you forgot your homework.” These responses show your love without interfering.