



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Questions from readers

Question:

I regularly babysit my five-year-old grandson, and up until a few months ago his behavior was horrible. I started punishing him by making sit in the corner for about five minutes, and I noticed a big improvement in his behavior. However, his mom found out about this and strongly objected. She told me to stop using timeout with her son or she would find another babysitter. I love my grandson but I can't put up with his bad behavior.

Answer:

While your grandson's mom has every right to tell you what discipline techniques are acceptable, you also have a right not to be terrorized by a five-year-old. Ask the mother exactly how she would like to respond when your grandson acts inappropriately. Perhaps her approach will be successful. However, if her discipline techniques don't work, then I would tell the mother that you can't accept the responsibility for caring for a young child if you don't also have reasonable authority to enforce standards of appropriate behavior.

Question:

My 12-year-old daughter seems preoccupied with sex. She is always asking me questions about sex, and making comments about things she sees on TV. I think she's way too young to be thinking about some of the things that are going on in her head, and I wish she would stop talking about this so much. Would it be wrong for me to tell her that she is too young to be so focused on sex?

Answer:

Many parents would love to have your problem! Isn't better that she is talking to you, rather than searching for answers on the Internet or talking with other kids? Continue to be patient, and respond in a calm and understanding manner to her questions. Use these questions as an opportunity to engage her in discussions regarding sexual values and appropriate behavior, not just to lecture her about physiology. You may also find it helpful to get a few books for her to read about sexual development.

Question:

My 14-year-old has told me several times that she never wants to have children. She is growing up in what many people would consider to be an ideal family. We are financially well off, she does great in school, has many friends, and gets along well with her three siblings. I'm not quite sure what to tell her when she says that she never wants kids.

Answer:

It's hard to know what she means by that remark. Next time she makes that comment, ask her to explain what she means. Don't become defensive, or try to convince her that she is wrong. It's best to be respectful of her opinion at this point, and simply communicate that you are supportive of whatever decisions she makes as a responsible adult.

Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit www.childrensdayton.org/ramey.