



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

Questions from readers

Question:

My 3-year-old son won't stay in his bed at night. He keeps coming into our bedroom, regardless of what I say to him. I finally threatened that the boogie man would get him if he came out of his room and this seems to be working. I hate to scare him, but I don't know of any other way to control his behavior.

Answer:

You should never threaten a child with consequences that you can't or don't want to deliver. There is a much easier way to deal with this common bedtime problem. Stop talking and threatening your son and instead, immediately put him back into his own bed whenever he goes into your room. Within a week or two he will learn that his behavior is not being reinforced and will stay in his own room throughout the night.

Question:

I think my in-laws are too tough on their 5 year old granddaughter. They seem very harsh with her - sometimes screaming at her, punishing her unnecessarily, and having expectations that seem too high for such a young child.

I've spoken to my husband about this, and he is also surprised as that is not the way he was raised. I would like to talk to my in-laws, but I don't want to hurt the relationship with our child.

Answer:

You and your husband need to have a frank discussion with his parents. Keep your approach balanced and positive. However, be very specific about what discipline techniques you find appropriate. If they are doing things that you find seriously objectionable, then you may need to limit their contact with your daughter to times when you are present. Your daughter's welfare comes before your in-law's feelings.

Question:

My 10-year-old has almost a perfect life, but he still seems whiny and negative. He goes to an excellent school, has two parents who love him dearly and give him a tremendous amount of attention, and has pretty much everything he wants. Even so, it seems like whatever we do is not enough and he is always asking for more. Does it sound like he may need professional help?

Answer:

Instead of seeing a psychologist, reflect upon your parenting approach. He has many of the characteristics of a spoiled child. Some kids develop a sense of entitlement. These youngsters depend upon others to entertain them, give them things, and satisfy their every whim. They are egocentric, self-absorbed, and generally unhappy.

It may be that you are giving him too much attention, and that he feels he is the center of your universe. Decrease the number of things you are giving him. Require him to do chores, and don't attend to his whining and complaining. Volunteer efforts through his church or school may also help change his perspective.

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.