

"I was a Better Parent Before I had Kids!"

An Interactive 6-session Parenting Series exclusively for parents of our preschool with School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski.



Parent Enrichment Program Session 6 Discussion Notes Topic: "Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World."

This discussion was led by School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski on May 14th, 2014.

The discussion notes below were written by Dr. Dobkowski.

I. What is Gratitude?

- The appreciation people feel when somebody has done something kind or helpful for them or when they recognize the good things and people they have in their lives.
- Until recently, there has been no research on the best way for children to develop and practice gratitude.
 - a. Some research has found that grateful young adolescents (ages 11-13), compared to their less grateful peers, are happier; are more optimistic; have better social support from friends and family; are more satisfied with their school, family, friends, and themselves.
- Gratitude is a quality that can be learned and strengthened with practice.
- One crucial way to transform a child's character is to make them more grateful.
- "Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important" (Stephen Covey).

II. Orienting family towards a more positive attitude

- Emotions give us important information about our environment. If we feel anxious, it may be because we sense a looming threat. If we feel angry, it may be because someone frustrated us. When we are happy, we do not always think about why.
- Focus children on *why* good things happen to them and on the people responsible for making the good things happen.
- Talk about the good things that happened during the week and why those things happened.

III. What can a parent do?

- *Demonstrate respectful behavior*- we don't generally give our children the kind of respect that we demand from them. Sometimes our upbringing makes us equate respect with fear.
- Begin by listening, get down to the child's level, and let the child know that you are interested in listening to what they have to say.
- *Teach polite responses*- Parents should model polite responses so that children can learn that these words are part of normal communication. What parents do and how they behave has significant influence on what children do.
- Part of the role of a parent is to help their children sort out the contradictions that children are exposed to either in schools or in the media.
- In our incredibly "busy world," we do not make the time to teach respect, consideration, and honesty (i.e., find teaching moments).

- In today's generation, people often comment that children demonstrate inflated egos and have no sense of responsibility or respect. Too much self-esteem creates a sense of entitlement.
- *Avoid overreacting-* Parents should try not to get emotional if they are called a name by a child.
- *Expect disagreements.*
- *Set limits.*
- *Praise respectful behavior.*

IV. Changing your child's ungrateful behavior

- The goal is to respect your child's desire for stuff without caving in to his demands. Listen to your child while he shares his desires. This models being a good listener.
- 1. Describe the child's dilemma using a compassionate tone.
2. Explain briefly and clearly why you are saying no.
3. Do not go overboard naming feelings. This patronizing attitude merely irritates children.
- In order to effectively teach children gratitude, we parents must begin with ourselves. If your mood is only lifted by watching a sports event or a trip to the mall, your children will pick up on the not-so subtle message that acquiring things is a way to reward yourself, feel important, or elevate your mood.
- Children will not learn how to be grateful unless they see us practicing gratitude. No one is born feeling gratitude; it is an acquired or learned skill.
- 1. Reassess the type of family outings you are going on.
2. Try to avoid using the word *need* when you really mean *want*.
3. Be observant of how much you verbalize your envy for other people's things in front of the children.
- Children are masters at appreciating the "little things." They exude a natural exuberance and appreciation for life and its holy details. Parents should slow down to appreciate what enralls, astonishes, charms, and tickles your child.
- Have a family meal where each individual says something they are thankful for.
- Twelve-step programs teach the participants to "act themselves into right thinking." Children love all the appreciation they get from doing something nice.