

Try a little Kindness and Firmness...

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Ever feel like you're doing the "Parenting Dance"? The one where your kids push your buttons until you can't take it anymore so you yell and scream and send them off to their rooms. Then, you feel bad about the yelling and screaming so the next time that they ask for a cookie before dinner, or they just don't feel like doing their homework, you give in. "Sure honey, have a cookie....take two.....and don't worry about your homework, I'll write your teacher a note". Then you feel resentful, now your children aren't eating their dinner and they're playing video games while you're feeling guilty about the homework not getting done. So, you yell, scream, send them to their room and the dance continues.

Guess who controls this dance?

The parenting dance is a common dance. Perhaps you learned it from your parents who learned it from their parents who learned it from their parents. As parents, we try to find a balance between being the strict, limit providing parent and the fun, loving, kind parent. It's tough to balance and we find ourselves in an exhausting, yo-yo quest for sanity and some sense of parental accomplishment.

Rather than trying to balance kindness and firmness, try using **kindness and firmness at the same time**. An example of this is....

My four year old son is wanting to watch yet another television show. I ask him to turn off the TV. He says "no". I ask him again....he says "no mom, just one more show". As I move in to turn off the TV, he covers the buttons so I can't get to them. As I frantically search for the remote, I feel my blood beginning to boil...I want to disconnect the TV, toss it into the garage and hope I never have to see it in my home again. And of course, I want to yell and scream at my son and send him to his room. And then the words Kindness and Firmness find their way in to my reactive brain and I stop. I put my kind and firm arms around him in a hug and with a quiet voice I say "I need the TV to be turned off". I repeat this several times until both of us are calm. As we both relax, I let go of the hug and he bounds away up to his room where he finds some toys to play with.

Kindness and Firmness at the same time has helped me to set boundaries and limits in my home. It allows me to have respect for my needs and respect for my children. If I can be kind and firm with my children, I notice them being kind and firm with each other and with me. It quiets the dance. It gives me some peace of mind. I can be the kind and loving mom that I want to be while having respect for my needs and the needs of our family.

Kindness and Firmness is from Positive Discipline, Nelsen, Lott et.al.