SHAME DOES NOT TEACH CHILDREN TO DO BETTER

Why Parents May Want to Reconsider Shame as a Parenting Tactic

Have you seen the children in the “This is our get along shirt”? What about children with the signs: “Don’t trust me. I am a thief and will steal from you”? Or the girl that was made to wear some thrift shop outfits to look like she was teasing?

Shaming and making a child feel badly about stealing, teasing, bullying and other missteps have become such an unfortunate trend in parenting. While it may give parents a sense that they are doing something and teaching their child a lesson, the lessons connected to feeling shame are most often far from helpful:

- **Shame can lead to a child feeling incapable, alone and discouraged** – all which have the potential to lead to more negative behavior and unacceptable choices. As parents we should be building our children up, not tearing them down.
- **Shame and humiliation teach shame and humiliation.** Children that bully and shame others have most typically experienced the same from a parent, caregiver or peer. Using shame to “teach” perpetuates the cycle of shame, humiliation and bullying.
- **Shame and humiliation lead to negative feelings of self-worth.** Several different bodies of research show that punishment (including shame tactics and spanking) will not lead to any long term results. On the contrary, it actually shows that over time, punishments can have negative impacts on a child’s esteem, confidence and overall well-being.
- **Shame breaks trust and respect between parents and children.** For children to grow healthy and well, feeling mutual trust, respect and love is vital.
- **Shame does not help children learn positive values such as making amends, team work, cooperation or problem solving.** A child that is forced to wear the “I steal don’t trust me” t-shirt is not learning about not stealing or how to make amends or getting to the reasons behind the stealing.

What shame may be teaching children to think about:
- “I am worthless.”
- “I’m incapable of solving problems.”
- “I can’t trust anyone.”
- “I am bad and I do bad things.”
- “Power always wins out.”

What parenting without shame can teach children to think about:
- “I belong.”
- “Problems can be solved.”
- “I can trust my parents to guide me.”
- “I made a mistake. I can make amends.”
- “Everyone deserves respect.”

HOW TO PARENT LIKE AN FBI AGENT

No, you won’t need any bugging devices.

Ever feel like parenting would be a lot easier if you just had a full-time security team at your beck and call? And maybe an interrogation room?

You might not be able to swing that on this month’s budget, but Jack Schafer, a psychologist who and former FBI Special Agent, says parents can benefit from the tips of his trade. Here’s what he learned during 15 years conducting counterintelligence investigations – and how it applies to parenting.

CONTINUE READING

Adoption Respite Days

Each adopted child who receives a subsidy from Iowa is eligible to receive five days of respite care per fiscal year at $20 per day. The current fiscal year for the Adoption Respite Program runs from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. All respite days must be used during these dates and submitted to IFAPA by June 30, 2015. MORE DETAILS
Written By: Amy Vaughan

My children are my greatest treasure on earth. They are worth more to me than all my possessions combined. Most of you feel the same way about your children—whether they were born to you or placed into your family to blossom. Our children are what matter, and there is no close second. That is why it is so extremely painful when one of our children hits a wall in development, bumps up against something bigger than his skill set, and gets stuck.

I believe there are ways to help children get unstuck by focusing on the cause and outcome of the behavior and considering the effect of sensory processing. Many children in foster care and adoption struggle with sensory processing, and being thoughtful about how this affects their behavior can help parents create opportunities for success.

The Impact of Stress
Stress happens in all children’s lives. Some stress is relatively mild and routine such as when children learn a new skill or take a math or spelling test. But stress can also be more intense and chronic for children who are experiencing disrupted home life, frequent moves, exposure to adult arguments, exposure to violence, excessive screen time, unrealistic demands and performance pressure, and especially neglect and abuse.

Many adults underestimate the amount of stress in children’s lives. In foster care and adoption, it is important to recognize the impact that previous life circumstances have had on a child. We must realize that the journey to healing and mental health takes time, sometimes a long time, because those wounds are significant and deep.

Even a child adopted or fostered from birth can be recovering from the effects of the stress chemicals, such as adrenalin and cortisol, that pass from the mother to baby in the womb. Most would agree a birth mother who places her baby for adoption (voluntarily or involuntarily) experiences a greater amount of stress during pregnancy than is typical. Therefore, all children in foster care and adoption have been fighting a stress reaction before we met them.

Regardless of its source, a stress reaction affects the limbic system and challenges emotional regulation skills. It also directly affects the amygdala—the part of the brain that, during a crisis, sends a signal to the body to prepare for fright, fight, or flight reactions. Over-active startle reflexes, over-sensitivity to situations that most other people handle well, and running or fighting behaviors can all be linked back, in part, to the body’s inability to handle stress effectively and efficiently.

When stress happens, whether it is due to adjustment, trauma triggers, developmental delay, or behavior, one of the best things a parent can do is take a step back and make a plan to create a win-win situation. A win-win happens when parents create a strategy tailored to their child and family so that everyone succeeds.

As a pediatric occupational therapist, I often meet families when they have bumped up against a barrier, and the child and family have gotten stuck. In these situations, the first thing I remind them is: “Your goal is not to just get the problem behavior to go away. Your goal is to teach a better way.” When we keep that goal forefront in our minds, the process to achieving a better tomorrow is smoother.