

Client's Question:

I am a single mom, and in a shared 50/50 custody arrangement with an uncooperative, irresponsible ex. My child is 4 years old, and I have watched her behavior and personality deteriorate since this arrangement was enforced over two years ago. I am reaching the end of my rope as I have very little control over the way my daughter is disciplined. She is spending time in two entirely different environments in which there is no consistency and her father will not cooperate or even speak civilly to me so that we can tackle her behavioral problems together. I am noticing in the last several months that my patience wears thin much more regularly than it used to. Against my own beliefs, I have begun to spank my daughter, and I yell more than I used to or ever wanted to. I feel terrible about it- all the time. But she only obeys me when I yell, and I just don't have the energy or mental capacity anymore to do the things I used to (distractions, time outs, counting to ten). Nothing works and my relationship with my daughter is getting bad. I am afraid of scarring her for life, and I want this to stop, but I don't know how or what to do. The worst thing is, I only have her 3 to 5 days a week, depending on which week it is, so strategies I try to instill good behavior are always undone... she has no consistency or stability, and there is nothing I can do about it. I love her so much, and I'm messing up really bad. I have to learn to be a better mother.

ScottCounseling Response:

Dear Concerned Parent:

Thanks for contacting ScottCounseling.com.

First off, you need to know that you are already a good mom. Over the past three decades I have written and spoken to hundreds of parents who have shared the same concerns as your email...you are not alone! The good news is that I have heard many positive stories how they and their child have developed a healthy, loving relationship that is still going on today. So, let's get to work on your concerns!

- 1) Don't spend a great deal of time worrying about or trying to change your ex-husband. The important thing is, is that you are consistent with who you are and just like you shared, more consistent with loving and disciplining your child.
- 2) Do you have support (other than me)? Another parent, trusting relative, pastor of a church etc? The reason why I ask this is that it's important to develop a support group with other parents or adult who you can bounce ideas off of. It's also encouraging to meet and share ideas with others who are experiencing or have gone through your challenges.
- 3) Yes, no more spankings. Why? They do not make you feel good using this discipline strategy and spankings seldom achieve the intended purpose.

I want you to read the following articles from my Website: ScottScounseling.com

"Discipline Tips for Successful Parenting" Read both pages. This article can also be

found at:

<http://www.scottcounseling.com/wordpress/discipline-tips-for-successful-parenting/2008/05/19/> Read both pages.

There are numerous other articles including one on "Directions: Getting Your Child To Follow Orders"

4) It seems like you really want to spend some fun and quality time with your daughter but her behavior interferes with that. Here are some things to try:

- Pick your battles: Leave the little things alone: bedroom, not completing a chore perfectly, forgetting to brush teeth. In these situations, just put some tooth paste on her brush and set it by the sink; she'll brush. Go after the big things: No foul language, no crossing busy street alone, no stealing. My Website has many articles and tips on how to handle these situations.
- When your daughter does not listen, try these strategies:
 1. Walk away...give her time to think...and give yourself a chance to cool down (if necessary)
 2. Look at her. Yep...just look. Do not give the "evil eye," but the eyes of "get goin!" After 15-20 seconds, walk away. Don't say anything.
 3. Always, always, always end the day with "I Love You!" Tell her constantly that you love her.

5) Give yourself some credit! Parenting is hard, but worth every hard minute you put into it!

Please get back to me after you read this and let me know your thoughts.

Scott
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