

Kids Are Selfish People Like The Rest of Us

My kids are out to make themselves satisfied. They will do this by whatever means makes sense to attain their desired goals. They will complain, cry, get angry, cooperate, ask nicely, play on internal feelings of guilt, work for it, lie, negotiate, hit, or sometimes even decide it isn't worth the costs and move on.

Counter to some ideas of peaceful parents, kids aren't innately kind, good, altruistic or benevolent. They are selfish beings out to get their desires met. This makes them no different from adults.

As parents we have the opportunity to be leaders and set the culture of resource attainment in our homes. We do this by leading through example, and by having cooperative strategies prove to be successful.

Children will test the boundaries of your parenting by trying every method. Ones that prove successful will be continued and ones that fail will stop. It is funny going to a party and seeing parents in an adult discussion ignoring their kids polite attempts at attention until the child finally boldly interrupts and the parent finally responds and gets angry about how rude their child is. The friendly and cooperative methods don't work here, but the aggressive methods do work ... you have taught your child how to interact with you.

I have seen moms who feel constant parenting guilt tend to have children who prey on this by playing the victim when they don't get what they want. I have seen parents who don't set personal boundaries get trampled on by their children. I have seen parents who hate conflict have children who rushes to conflict when they want to get what they want.

In order to be a peaceful parent and have a cooperative household, it isn't just about being nice and proclaiming a lofty philosophy. It is about making sure cooperation and negotiation are displayed and incentivized. It is about making sure that you respect yourself, your boundaries and making sure children don't have means of manipulating and controlling you.

I see this subtly in my house a lot. My kids are regularly testing the boundaries of our relationship. A funny story that provides a clear example ...

When we had our second daughter my wife was feeling very concerned about the attention our oldest daughter got. She would make it a big issue, but I believed my wife was overly worried about nothing since I was giving tons of attention to our oldest daughter. One day I came home and immediately my daughter asked me for something, I told her that I didn't want to comply. She then made a very sad face and said "I just feel like since Dodger (youngest daughter) came along that I am not getting attention anymore."

I replied, “you are getting more attention than ever Cambria.” It also sparked in my head that my wife must’ve brought these concerns up to Cambria and now she is banking on them. Later I talked to Rose and she confirmed it. I sat down with Cambria and talked to her about this and it never came up again.

Kids are selfish people trying to get their desires met. They will do this by cooperative or non-cooperative means and they will understand which strategy to employ by testing your boundaries and exploiting your weaknesses.

This runs counter to many narratives of gentle/peaceful parents. Non-cooperative behavior can be shown to them, but they will find it even if it isn’t the example you’ve provided. Kids aren’t benevolent beings. Kids are just like all humans, they are out to figure out how to be happy and they will walk over your dead body to do it (probably a little bit of an exaggeration). The goal is to lead by example, be a cooperative person, make sure your kids have cooperative means of generally attaining their desires, and eliminate the exploitive/non-cooperative means they can use to get what they want.