

Parenting With Violence

In my estimation, there are two methods that one can take with parenting: you can either violently rule over your children, or you can non-violently mentor them. As the existence of this website indicates, I've happily and excitedly chosen the latter.

A thought experiment:

1) Your 6-year-old doesn't want to go to his Primary class (church) because he doesn't know the teacher very well. You tell him that he has to, that he doesn't have a choice.

2) Same scenario as above, this time you tell him that he can either go to his class, or come with you to yours.

3) Same scenario again, this time you tell him that he doesn't have to go to his class, that he's welcome to come to yours, or his mom's, or he can hang out in the hallways. Whatever he wants to do, it's his choice, you tell him.

Which of the above is violence-based parenting, and which isn't? Well, that depends. Which of the above have any teeth? Consider scenarios 1 and 2. If your 6-year-old chooses "none of the above" and insists on it, what will you do about it? If you're serious about your demands, you'll resort to violence, ie. forcing your kids to choose, or face the violent consequences. If you aren't serious about your demands, then 1 and 2 are a waste of time and damaging to your relationship with your son. He learns that you don't mean what you say. How can he trust someone that he can't believe?

If you are serious, he learns that violence is an appropriate response to peaceful resistance, that it's okay to violently control other human beings. No good can come from 1 and 2, serious or not. Forsake them.

Number 3 is the correct response to a seemingly defiant child. In reality, he's not being defiant, nor rebellious. He has a need that's not being met, and your job as his mentor is to figure it out, and meet it. This won't happen every week, nor will him happily attending his primary class. Your child will learn to trust that you won't lie to him, and won't try to violently control him. He'll learn to love you and respect you, because he'll feel the love and respect you have for him. Life won't go according to plan all of the time, or most of the time, but that's how things work when you approach your children as human beings with separate interests. You can't violently control your friends, why do you think it's okay to do so with your children?

One house, many interests. How do you meet them all? How do you meet them all without damaging the relationship you have with your kids, without pushing them away until one

day, they're gone, with no intention of coming back? Unconditional love and approaching your children as a mentor, not a ruler, is my suggestion.

We're going through a big learning curve right now in my house, but we're committed. We've had highs and lows, but I've been surprised and delighted at some of my son's choices. We won't compromise. We want our children's love and respect when they're independent adults. I refuse to use violence against my children. And I hope you will to.