

The Self-Ownership of Children

Writes Free Your Kids:

Self-ownership is indispensable to freedom. We teach our kids that they own themselves and that they alone dictate what happens to them. Any force, aggression, or coercion against them is unacceptable. They own themselves; this is non-negotiable.

But how to teach this to a toddler or an infant? Words are relatively ineffective when they're very young, so we show them. We allow them to be as free as possible. If we're holding our toddler and she starts wiggling, wanting to be put down, we'll set her down. Now, I know someone's going to say, 'Well, what about if she wants put down in front of a moving train?' Obviously, we'll set her down within reason. Not in front of an oncoming locomotive, not on a hornet's nest, and not in front of a rattlesnake.

We keep aggression against them to a minimum. They don't want to eat right now? They don't want a nap? They don't want to do something we think they should be doing? Generally, unless they're going to be harmed or harm someone else, we'll let them go. We try to let them control their own lives.

Even as infants, this is possible. Know how friends and family will play "pass the baby around"? If baby is fine with this, then it's cool. But if baby is upset – and a parent (especially a mother) knows when they are – then it stops. Baby comes back to Mama. Sometimes Daddy is holding baby and baby clearly wants Mama. She goes back to Mama, if possible. By honoring their requests, even the non-verbal cues of infants, we show them that they have control over their lives.

The most crucial thing for infants and toddlers is this: do not force them to accept unwanted touching from others. If they are

uncomfortable being held, touched, hugged, or kissed – by anyone – then forcing them to submit shows them that they do not have control over their lives. Teaching them self-ownership at such a young age is done by simply acknowledging their desires and, if at all possible, granting them.