

No, You're Not "Doing Your Best"

"I'm doing my best," is a horrible response from a parent. I say this as half criticism and as half lifeline.

No one does their best. We all have a myriad of values that we balance in the decisions we make. We have many many things we care about, and we have to weigh these things out in the choices we make. If someone were to put all of their emotional and physical effort into their children or their idea of parenting, that would be impossible, but even if it were possible, it would be a horrible idea. This is why no one is ever 'trying their best'. The only scenario I can imagine someone could possibly "try their best" is if there was an activity they had to do in 5 minutes and their life depended on it, otherwise, we are all just weighing values.

I am so critical "I'm doing my best" because it is a simultaneous cop-out and knee jerk defensive reaction from stress. It both side steps the point and puts too much pressure on parenting.

I'm going to be harsh for a second. You aren't trying your best. "I'm doing my best" is a bullshit cop out you are using to distract. Usually when your child gets frustrated at your parenting they want to discuss the values and philosophical approach you are taking in order to connect. Usually when others discuss parenting they are trying to discuss the balance, philosophy, and values people hold in parenting. If you don't have a good philosophy, coherent values, or balance ... no amount of thinking you are or trying to "do your best" will make any difference.

I grow even more critical because children are "trying their best" by the same standards, but that doesn't stop our society from fully supporting punitive treatment and shame. This line we only allow to the people with authority and power ... you see this same line of reasoning from police and teachers in our culture.

Here is the lifeline part. You shouldn't be thinking about or strive to do your best or be perfect. You should strive to have balance in your life, figure out your philosophy and values. You shouldn't be putting perfectionistic standards on yourself. Give up on trying to do your best. Try to have balance. Try to have empathy for yourself and your kids. Know yourself. Know your children. Model leadership. Figure out what kind of parent you want to be and not just react and go on the defensive. When you do something you feel bad about, apologize, but be nice to yourself ... we all make mistakes.

"I'm trying my best" is a lie we use for self-preservation. I think if you drop it and merely focus on values, ideas and balance while offering yourself and others empathy, you will be

more open to discussing your parenting, and more empathetic of yourself without having to resort to the disingenuous lines that lack positive productivity and kill discussion.