

Parental Bullying

Writes Free Your Kids:

Years ago, when I was still of the mindset to yell, scold, and smack little hands, I had an acquaintance at work who taught me a lesson. Now, he didn't intend to teach me a lesson, but teach it he did.

This guy routinely verbally-abused those he felt he were "weaker" than him. Anyone who was physically smaller or unable to verbally defend themselves was fair game. He would pick at them, mock them, berate them, castigate their decisions, and just generally act like an ass. Now, someone who he considered his "equal", someone who could return fire with fire, he left alone. He only attacked the smaller and less capable.

I was really quite disgusted by this. He was the stereotypical schoolyard bully, except all grown-up. Then, one day, it hit me. No, it crushed me. Our first child was two years old at the time and I saw in my own behavior much of what I despised in my co-worker's. I would constantly yell at my son. I'd speak harshly to him. I would swat him on the butt. I disrespected his wishes. I would say mean things to him. I was bullying him. I wasn't gently guiding him. I treated him as an inferior because he was small and couldn't defend himself. I wouldn't act this way with his mother. I wouldn't have treated a friend or grown family member this way. Yet, I was often treating my own baby boy like garbage.

This realization truly changed my life. The full impact of what I'd been doing affected me deeply. I began to change myself. I looked at my son with new eyes. Compassionate eyes. I didn't want him to view me as feared authority figure. I didn't want his memories of his father to be ones that evoked disgust. I found the strength to change when I

placed myself in his position, when I looked honestly at my character and found it lacking, and when I confronted the uncomfortable reality that I had become what I despised.

I'm still far from perfect here, but each day I try to do better.