

Re: The Joy of Manipulation

Writes Scott Noelle:

The word manipulate means “to handle skillfully.” Since the main function of childhood is learning how to handle life skillfully, a “manipulative” child is only doing what comes naturally. A good relationship is one in which both parties can manipulate each other in ways they both enjoy. They dance with one mind, like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. It’s called attunement. When you and your child are well-attuned, the manipulation can be so subtle that all you notice is the pleasure of your connection. But when you’re distracted or stressed, your child will escalate to unsubtle, unpleasant cues like crying or whining — whatever it takes to get your attention.

Conventional (adversarial) parenting advice says you mustn’t “give in” to such manipulation. The parent “wins” when the child gives up hope. When you understand that unpleasant manipulation is a symptom of failed attunement, the path becomes clear:

- * Align with your Self.*
- * Attune with your child.*
- * Focus on the pleasure of connecting.*
- * Everyone wins.*