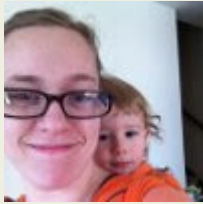


Self-Ownership in Parenting



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"Balancing on My Toes" is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), her partner Daddy G and father-in-law Grandpa G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found [here](#). BMT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Self-ownership is an easy concept on the surface, but is actually quite complex after one starts to apply it to everyday life. This weeks conversation will cover the self-ownership principle and its applications, some of its long term effects, how it has changed my view on parenting to match my self convictions, some easy steps to begin to use self-ownership in your life, and how to use it in relation to parenting. So what is the self-ownership principle? It is basically the notion that a person is in charge of themselves. They make their own decisions and their own destiny. They can allow others to give them a hug, a kiss or a handshake, or decide not to at all. The self-ownership principle is based on respect. Respect for yourself and respect for others. If a child does not want to give a relative a kiss, that should be just as acceptable as an adult letting another adult know they will not be shaking their hand, say, due to contamination fears.

Applications and Long-term Effects

Self-ownership creates a different relationship with the words and meanings of 'yes' and 'no'. Yes you may and no you may not, should both be equal responses in everyday interactions. Applying self-ownership as a child, after learning it from their parents modeling it for them, means putting effort towards a meaningful cause such as education and helping out around the house because they should; because they understand that it is important to fill those roles to work towards a bigger goal. For an adult self-ownership means owning up to both the responsibility of raising a child and teaching them to be self-responsible adults. This can help a child feel more comfortable at family gatherings, a teen resist peer pressure, a would-be victim knowing enough to not allow victimizing behavior and adults that can pass these traits along.

Self-responsibility is a desirable trait in the work world and so is accountability. Both of

these traits are in themselves good things and applying self-ownership will help children learn to take credit for both successes and failures in kind as well as build self-confidence. If a child is allowed to trust their own instincts when interacting with strangers will set them up for following their instincts later in life instead of questioning these instincts. Scenario: A small child is always made to kiss its parents' relatives. This child does not want to do this, but is made to or will be punished. Later in life this same child does not want to see a particular person romantically, but is pressured by friends to "just do it" because "it won't hurt anything" and "it will be fine", but then later that same child ends up victim of his/her inability to follow instincts and ends up in trouble or hurt, or worse. On the other hand, a child that is allowed to act upon its own instincts learns to trust that feeling and does not let him/herself to be talked into things by peers or authority figures, but instead learns the ability to reserve him/herself until trust is created. This can serve a person well once adult concepts like drugs, alcohol and sex become important issues.

Self-Ownership in My Home

I have two children, one teen and one toddler, and a dog. I also live with my significant other. Self-ownership has helped me hold myself accountable. If I plan on doing something it is my responsibility to get it done and if my failures in these endeavors affect the others I care about it means I own that too and apologize and act on those feelings till all is set again. My teen uses self-ownership but did not really grow up with the concept, so we are just learning to navigate it together. He has a room and I ask to come in and as long as his door is closed the baby is not allowed to go in there. But because he is a baby he is rascally and may find himself in there. He really likes his brother. I don't impose on him undue hardship with chores, only enough to help out and I don't encroach on his home time. He basically uses this to play video games endlessly. This has changed my outlook on life. I have gotten used to saying things like, "May I kiss your cheek?" and, "If its okay with you we are going to get in the car now." I find I am modeling respect more because I am not just acting on his person, I am letting him understand what is going on and give him choices in the places I can. I believe this will increase his confidence more and more in his years to come and I feel it will be a pleasure to see how he comes out on the other end.

How to Begin the Self-Ownership Mindset

Begin by reading up on the concept and learning about how others have applied it to their lives. Just like this column does. Learning is the first step, but learning how to navigate this mindset is the next step. So your child is acting out. Self-ownership starts here. As a parent if your child is acting out you can probably guess why in many situations. Tired, hungry, and overstimulated are a few reasons children act out. They just don't understand their emotions or how to handle them. As a self-owned parent you realize it is your responsibility to meet your child's needs before the undesirable behavior can be addressed. If my child is acting out in a store at 5 PM it is probably my fault because at that time often a child needs

to eat and is nearing the end of their day. Gentle parenting is possible. Physical force is unnecessary and using self-ownership is a powerful tool to achieving that goal. So if you ask for a kiss and your child says no, smile and say that it is okay if they want it late. They know you are always there for them and the parent can be confident that later in life that same child will not need others assurances, and that they will be confident to say no to others. After all saying no often is just as important as saying yes.

Now that the concept of self-ownership has been explained here, I encourage anyone that has questions to do some research. Respect is something many parents desire. Respect your children and they will learn respect, be gentle to your children and they will learn to treat others gently, and teach self-ownership and they will be in control of their daily interactions.

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