

She Spat, Then I Spat

My three-year-old is full of life and has a great, fresh sense of humor. Her favorite word, if you ask her, is “fuck!” She uses it quite often, much to the delight of myself and her older siblings.

Some of her favorite phrases are, “fuck’n’roll!”, “fuckaroni and cheese!”, and as of a few days ago her, “what the heck are you talking about?” has transformed into, “what the fuck are you talking about?”, always delivered with a smile and a gleam in her eye. (Alright, I helped her improve that last one, *snicker*.)

A few weeks ago, she started spitting. This doesn’t seem uncommon for little kids. They eventually discover the process and she found some joy in it. So much so, that she thought she’d share it with me, and spit right on my face.

I could have turned sour, and angry, and yelled at her, or slapped her, or spanked her, or put her in time-out, or some such other form of punishment to “teach” her that spitting on people’s faces is “wrong”.

But I didn’t do any of that, not even the turning sour or angry bit.

Rather, I playfully spit back, right on her face. What did she do?

She took stock, and then let out a giggle! And then spat on my face again.

I performed in kind. Then her again. Then me. Then her. Then me.

Then she stopped. Both of our faces covered in each others’ spittle. Just dripping with it.

She was done giggling, and was now wiping it off with a slight look of disgust, realizing her mistake.

She hasn’t spit on my face, or anyone else’s face, since.

I’d say the “problem” has been solved. It didn’t require any negativity or fear or shame. All it took was some playfulness, and she eventually realized that spitting isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. She satiated her curiosity (which is all it was in the first place), and moved on with her life.

Every “misbehavior” we see in children can be solved in playful ways. Punishments are *never* required, and *always* lead to unintended consequences, much to the detriment of the child, their associates, and the rest of society.

I stopped foolishly using punishment in the way I parent going on seven years now. If you feel like improving your relationship with your children and solving behavioral problems, let me know. I'm happy to help!