

# The Teenage Years

Your Window of Opportunity

by Tom Dozier

Based on the works of Glenn Latham

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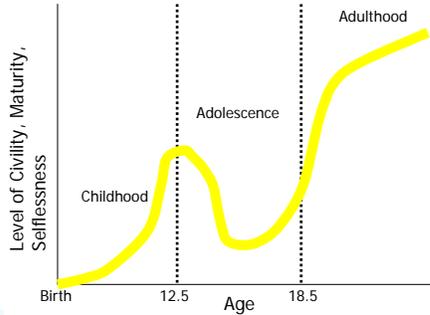
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Dr. Glenn I. Latham, 1931-2001



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On the Road to Civility, Maturity, and Selflessness



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## The Teenage Years

- Parental Expectations
- Parental Presence
- Parental Connectedness
- Venue Control
- Managing Conflict



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## Parental Expectations

- School Achievement
- Sexual Behavior
- Violence, Emotional Distress and Suicide
- Substance Abuse



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## When teaching expectations

- Use instructive language rather than prohibitive language



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<b>Instead of saying</b>	<b>Say</b>
Don't slam the door.	Please shut the door quietly.
Don't have sex.	Have high moral standards. Be chaste.
Don't shout.	Speak softly.
Quit frowning, Don't look at me like that! or Quit rolling your eyes at me!	Be pleasant.

<b>Instead of saying</b>	<b>Say</b>
Don't use drugs.	Take good care of your body.
Don't go steady.	Date a variety of people.
Don't drive recklessly.	Drive safely.
Don't cheat.	Be honest.
Don't go parking.	Stay in well lit places with other people.

### When teaching expectations

- Use instructive language rather than prohibitive language
- **Role-play the expectations and consequences.**

### When teaching expectations

1. Once the expectation is understood, it is restated only by the child
  - Never tell the child something he/she already knows.
  - If you want to make sure the child hears what you want him to hear, have the child say it.

### Keep the communication moving in the right direction.

“Behavioral Noise” (e.g.,... “but...”)

*The Expectation*

Redirect by focusing on the expectation. Do this using empathy and understanding: “I can tell this upsets you; nevertheless, to earn the privilege of using the car, when must it be home?”

### When teaching expectations

2. Emphasize the earned positive consequences
  - Parent: “So, what do you have to gain by getting the car home on time?”
  - Child: “Well, I’ll be able to use the car again, But I still don’t feel this is fair. It’s a dumb rule!”
  - Parent: “That’s right. You’ll earn the privilege of using the car. Super good!”
  - Remember – you don’t give or take away!

## When teaching expectations

- Respond to anger and protest with empathy and understanding, then return to the expectations. Avoid using reason, logic and good sense.

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## When teaching expectations

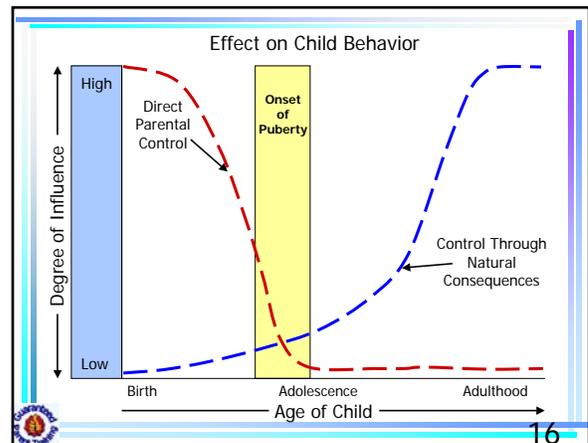
- Negotiations are based entirely on the behavioral history of the child.
  - Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.

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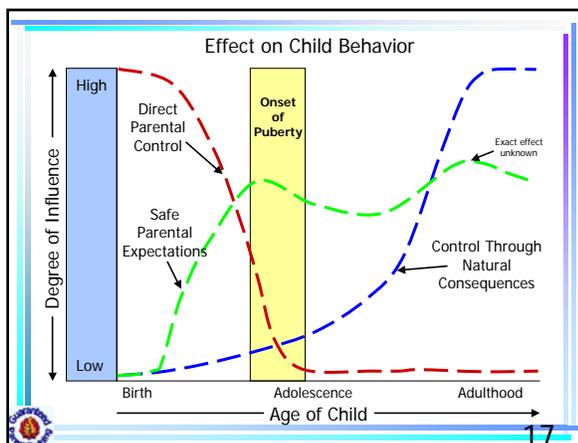
## When teaching expectations

- Use instructive language rather than prohibitive language
- Role-play the expectations and consequences.
- Let the consequences do the talking for you.**
  - We need to have compassion for kids and problems, even of their own making
  - Don't take the consequence (provide money, goods, etc)
  - Don't displace blame
  - Keep our word

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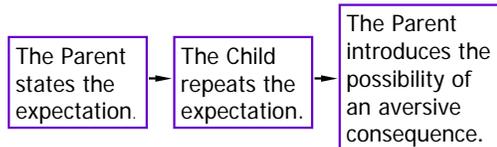


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## If At All Possible, Give Expectations a Chance



A coercive environment in which the child behaves well only to avoid the negative consequence of behaving badly.



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## If At All Possible, Give Expectations a Chance

The Parent states the expectation.

The Child repeats the expectation.

The Parent waits for an opportunity to acknowledge compliance, then does so.

A reinforcing environment in which the child learns that by behaving well, he/she enjoys the positive consequences of behaving well.



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Our job as parents is to create a noncoercive environment which encourages children to behave well so that desirable behavior can be strengthened with some type of a reinforcing consequence.

An Encouraging Environment



An Positive Consequence



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## For Non-Compliance Problems:

1. Be slow to introduce aversives.
2. Aversives tend to create coercive environments.
3. Discuss what you expect, but let the child tell you.
4. Discuss what is earned by compliance.
5. Establish a "response cost" (punishment). A privilege that the child will "deny himself" if he chooses to respond inappropriately.

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## For Chronic Problems (cont):

Example of getting car home late:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> time: "I am sure that things came up, but what time to I expect the car back.?" (You expect it home by 9:30, but things came up.) "I am glad that you know I expect the car back by 9:30."
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> time: Exactly the same thing, but introduce a contingency. "Son, I am sorry you chose to keep the car out beyond 9:30, but what privileged do you earn by having the car in on time." ( )
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> time: "Son, I am sorry that you chose to do this, should you decide to keep the car out beyond 9:30 again, there will be a cost. And so son, if you decide to do that, it's going to cost you the use of the car. You will deny yourself the privilege of using the car for one week and give up your drivers license and car keys for that time."

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## Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviors:

1. Minimize the time given
2. Minimize the emotions given

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## Parental Presence

- At waking
- After school
- At dinner
- At bed time

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"When a child is left home alone for 11 hours or more a week, the chances of becoming involved with drugs, tobacco, alcohol, etc. double, regardless of the income or educational level of the family."

Harold Hodgkinsen, Demographer



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## Examples of Quality-time Opportunities

- Dates with your children – individually
- Family outings
- Visits to family/friends
- Service to others
- Working together\*



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## Parental Connectedness

- Feelings of warmth
- Feelings of love
- Feelings of caring



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## Coercion Encourages Children To:

1. **Escape**
2. **Avoid**
3. **Countercoerce**  
(meaning to get even)



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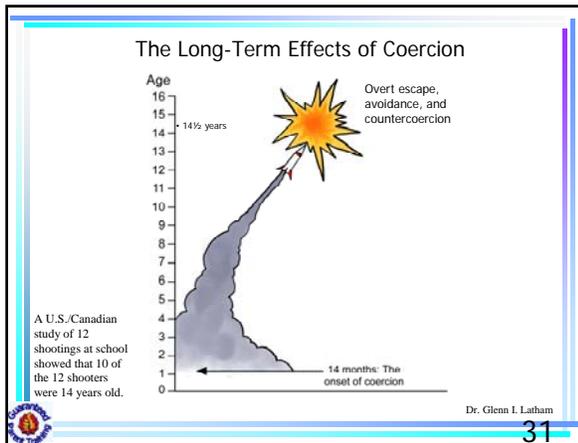
Mere compliance  
is not change.  
One can be made to comply,  
but...



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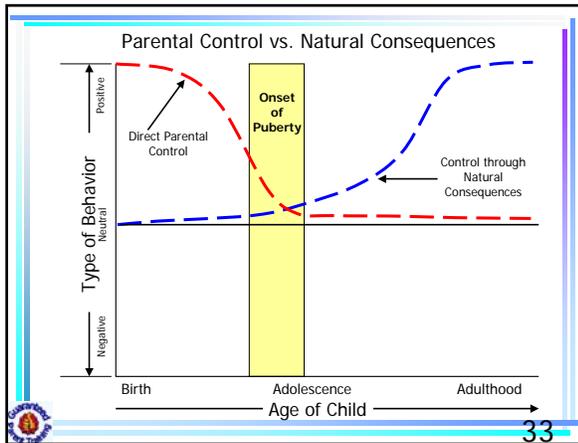
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## !! CAUTION !!

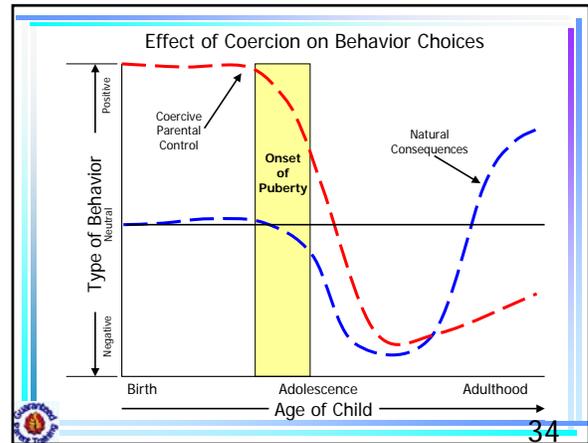
- “Do not suppose that short-term compliance achieved using coercive means leads to long-term gains.
- “Coercion produces only short-term compliance followed by long-term losses.”

*Dr. Glenn I. Latham*

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### Age Appropriate Control:

- Age 0 to 2: Almost 100% direct control.
- Age 2 or 3: to 6: Some expectations and consequences, but mostly direct control.
- Age 6 to 10: Children will assert themselves. Parents should use empathy, but be directive.
- Age 10-13: Heavy use of expectations, but parents should still say “No” if necessary. No arguing about it. Apply earned, negative consequences if necessary.
- Age 14 and up: Expectations and earned consequences. Parents control access to things, not personal freedom.

*Dr. Glenn I. Latham*

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“Sometimes discipline, which means “to teach,” is confused with criticism. Children—as well as people of all ages – improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from fault-finding.

*Susan W. Tanner  
“Did I Tell You ... ?  
Ensign, May 2003, 73–75*

“Love can make the difference – love generously given in childhood and reaching through the awkward years of youth ... and encouragement.”

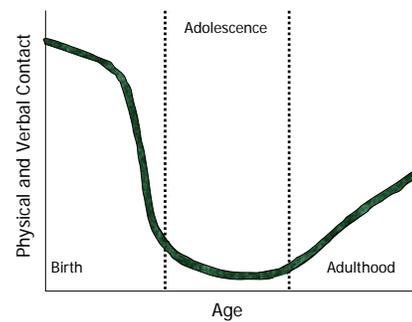
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When parents are calm and understanding, and noncoercive, they are safe, and children want to be close to them and with them.



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Incidence of Laughter, Touch, Talk and Listening



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### What to avoid when trying to communicate verbally:

- Spilling your guts
- Getting to the “bottom” of things
- Contriving teaching moments



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### What to avoid when trying to communicate verbally:

- Spilling your guts
- **Getting to the “bottom” of things**
- Contriving teaching moments



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### What to avoid when trying to communicate verbally:

- Spilling your guts
- Getting to the “bottom” of things
- **Contriving teaching moments**



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- Note: Unless what you are about to say or do has a high probability for making things better, don't say it – don't do it.
- An ounce of don't say it is worth a pound of I didn't mean it.



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## Avoid Verbal Polarizing

It only takes  
7 Seconds

Child's Position      Solution      Parent's Position

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## Positive Communication

- Avoid criticism
- Focus on "it" instead of "you".
- "Putting concern for good behavior first and the relationship second is a common and tempting pitfall. Satisfying family relationships will lead to good behaviors." (Roger McIntire, "Parents and Teenagers")
- Use reflective, sympathetic, and empathetic statements.
- Ask open ended positive questions
- "Be satisfied that most conversations with your teen, like those with your neighbor, will have little immediate result." (Roger McIntire, "Parents and Teenagers")
- Avoid suggesting solutions, and especially giving directives.

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## Avoid "you" judgments

\*Teenagers and Parents\*, Roger McIntire

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## Use "it", "what", or "how"

\*Teenagers and Parents\*, Roger McIntire

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[Ask,] "What is the biggest challenge or struggle you have right now?" This question opens the door for youth to share. And when they do, just listen! Don't judge or counsel or anything else. Just listen."

*Bonnie D. Parkin  
Relief Society General President  
Parents Have a Sacred Duty  
Worldwide Leadership Training, Feb. 2006*

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<u>Rather than saying</u>	<u>Say</u>
You should.	You might want to think about...
This is the way to do it.	Consider this.
You can't possibly be serious about that.	That's an interesting way to think about that.
Do it that way and you'll be sorry.	Have you thought about...? Give it a try.
Take my word for it, there's only one way to go.	All things considered, if it was my decision, I'd...

Dr. Glenn I. Latham

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## Attentive Listening:

- Eliminate Distracters:
  - TV
  - Radio
  - Newspapers/Magazines
  - Computer, etc.
- Make eye-to-eye contact
- Gesture attentiveness



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"A recent study demonstrated that in homes where children and their parents are able to talk with one another free of the risks of criticism, lecturing, judging, moralizing, etc., the probability of children experimenting with drugs in the first place is half that of children who come from homes where parents and their children have problems talking with one another.

*Dr. Glenn I. Latham  
Christlike Parenting p.106*



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## Avoid general criticism. Be specific about what you want!



"Teenagers and Parents", Roger McIntire



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## Acknowledge Positive Behavior

- Select specific positive behaviors
- Decide how to give praise/reward
  - Limit your comments to 12 words or 5 seconds.
- DO IT (often)
  - Increase good behavior
  - "There are many things I like about you."
- "Anything worth doing, is worth doing poorly, until you can learn to do it well."



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## Look for specific positive behavior



"Teenagers and Parents", Roger McIntire



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## "Venue" Control

- Access to:
  - Guns
  - Alcohol
  - Tobacco
  - Illicit substances
  - Media / Internet



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**“Long term exposure to media violence does two things:**

1. It desensitizes children and youth to violent acts.
2. It makes individuals more likely to commit violent acts.”

Hill M. Walker, University of Oregon



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“The media’s denial of this evidence is nearly identical to the tobacco industries response to scientific evidence of tobacco use. Media violence serves as a social toxin that can poison the wellspring of our society.”

Hill M. Walker, Larry K. Irvin, Jeffery R. Sprague  
“Violence Prevention and School Safety”  
Oregon School Study Council Bulletin, University of Oregon,  
College of Education, vol. 41, no.1, Fall 1997, p. 11



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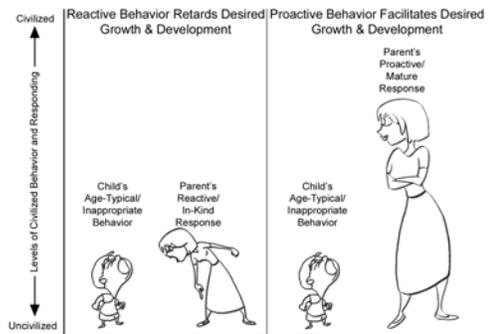
**Managing Conflict**

- Disagreements are inevitable
- Help youth learn to behave responsibly



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**Proactive vs. Reactive Responding**



Dr. Glenn I. Latham



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**When Emotions Are High:**

1. Never tell a child something he/she already knows.
2. Never ask or answer questions.

**Rather:**

1. Use empathy and understanding.
2. Focus on expectations.



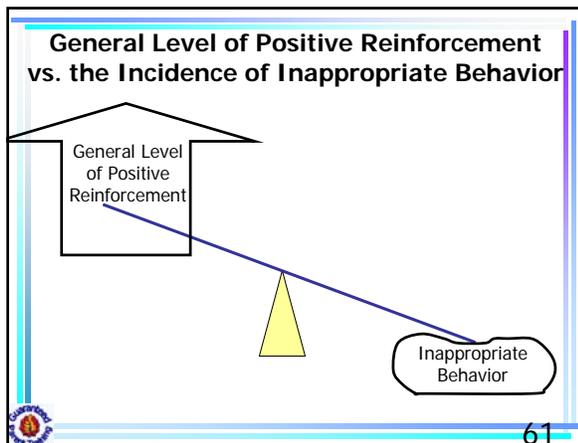
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“Hope for success is virtually nonexistent in the absence of parenting behaviors which tell children, “I’m glad you’re my child. I’m glad I’m your parent.”

Dr. Glenn I. Latham  
*Christlike Parenting p.195*



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- ### Rules are a problem because:
- They need a ruler to enforce them, and in the home, that's you. Rules make you the bad guy.
  - They divide parents from their children by putting children on one side of the issue, and the parent on the other. Rules are divisive.
  - Rules proliferate. There are never enough rules. Rules beget rules
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- ### Family Expectations:
- In this house we are all expected to:
- Treat one another kindly.
  - Be true to our word.
  - Contribute to the peace, happiness, and general well-being of the home.
  - Do the good things that we have been taught.
  - Take good care of ourselves.
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- ### Grandma's Law:
- ⇒ "Eat your vegetables, and then you can have pie and ice cream."
  - ⇒ The doing of low probability behaviors gives the child access to high probability behaviors.
  - ⇒ Application of Grandma's Law
    - ⇒ When you finish mowing the lawn, you earn the privilege using the car.
    - ⇒ When you go to your classes, you earn the privilege of texting.
  - ⇒ As adults, we think of this as motivation.
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- ### Determining the High Probability Behaviors:
- ⇒ Ask...
    - ⇒ "Son, when you do your homework, you earn the privileges that you enjoy in our home. And what are some of those privileges?"
    - ⇒ "Dear, homework is important. What would you like to earn by doing your homework?"
  - ⇒ Watch...
    - ⇒ Stand back and observe what the child goes to automatically. Those are the High Probability Behaviors.
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- ### Examples of Incentives:
- ⇒ Use of car
  - ⇒ Gasoline for car
  - ⇒ Use of cell phone
  - ⇒ Text messaging on cell phone
  - ⇒ Activity with friends
  - ⇒ Clothes, or money for clothes
  - ⇒ Playing video games
  - ⇒ Going out for dinner
  - ⇒ Ask child what they really want to do
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## How do you know when you have gone too far?

- ⇒ Watch what your child does.
  - ⇒ If your child starts to Escape, Avoid, and Get Even, then your actions are being viewed as coercive by your child.
- ⇒ Remember, Coercion produces short term compliance followed by long term losses.



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## When possible, answer with “Yes”?

- ⇒ Child: “Can I use the car?”
- ⇒ Parent: “Yes, just as soon as you finish your chores.”
- ⇒ Child: “Can you take me to get a pair of jeans?”
- ⇒ Parent: “Yes, after you finish your project.”
- ⇒ Child: “Will you take me and my friend to the mall?”
- ⇒ Parent: “I’ll be glad to, just as soon as your room is clean.”



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## Surprise or First Time Problems

1. STAY CALM!!!
2. Stay positive (don’t grumble or complain)
3. Ask child to state how he should behave (What did you expect him to do?)
4. Respond to complaints with empathy
5. Appreciate the child’s correct reply
6. Keep it short and sweet!
7. Remember, STAY CALM, Stay Firm!!!
8. No threats or punishment!
9. For repeating problems, MAKE A PLAN!



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## Using Punishment – **WARNING!!!**

1. Punishment is risky, decreases motivation, and decreases cooperation.
2. Using punishment is more difficult than using reinforcement. Requires consistency.
3. To be effective, punishment
  - Must be established in advance
  - Must be contingent on the child’s behavior
  - Must be consistent
  - Must be reasonable
  - Must be enforceable



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## Punishment Example

- Should you choose to hit your sister, there will be a cost. You will lose the privilege of (using the car) for 2 days.
- Avoid using words, “I’ll take away” or “I won’t let you”
- Punishment should be as short as possible.
  - Remember, a privilege can not be “lost” during the punishment period. Extending the time has limited effect!
- Punishment should be based on the things you control (or the child lets you control).
- REMEMBER: Set up the punishment in advance.
- Let the consequence do the nagging for you.



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“To the extent to which the child is unwilling to comply with family expectation, he deprives himself of privileges that would otherwise be available: the use of the car, allowance money, parental ‘taxi service’ and so on. He needs to understand, of course, that these are not being taken away from him. Rather, he hasn’t earned them, and he can only have what is earned. This is super important!”

*Dr. Glenn I. Latham  
Christlike Parenting p.91*



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On Being Prepared	
Anticipated Behavior	Noncoercive Response

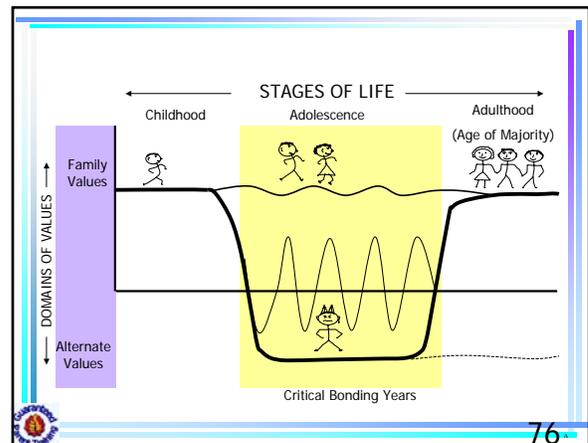
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Anticipated Behavior	My Proactive Response
My daughter gets angry at me, tells me she hates me, and that I am the worst mother in the world.	"I am sorry you are upset. I can understand that you would be."
-or-	
My son comes home smelling of tobacco smoke.	"Son, I'm sorry you've chosen to use tobacco. Please take good care of yourself. We wouldn't want any harm to come to you."

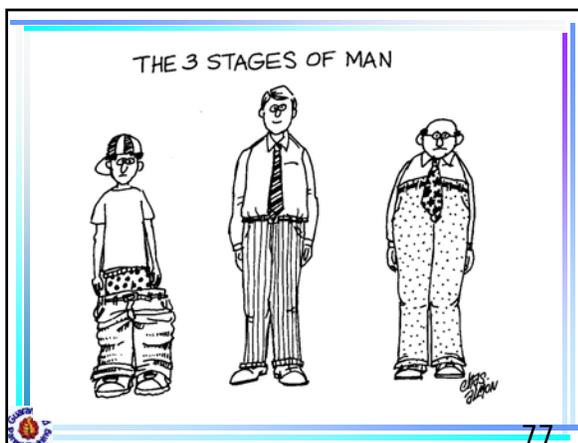
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- If at all possible, at least until age 18, keep your children at home. At home, they will be more likely to:**
- Complete their education and acquire self sufficiency skills.
  - Mature more gracefully into adulthood.
  - Acquire the family value system, and relate to it and the family.
  - Acquire the parenting skills they will one day need.

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- Published Works by Dr. Glenn Latham**
- The Power of Positive Parenting
  - Christlike Parenting
  - Parenting With Love
  - What's a Parent To Do
  - The Making of a Stable Family (video)
  - Parenting Prescriptions (audio tapes)
  - An Angel Out of Tune (CD)

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