

## Building Respectful Relationships with Children

By Chip DeLorenzo, M.Ed.

Creating respectful relationships with children take a lot of hard work. Our culture has changed drastically in the last 50 years and there are as many “parenting styles” it seems as there are parents. Just check out the parenting section in a bookstore!

Some parents provide a more “strict” environment in their homes, and others a more “permissive” one. Those of us who grew up in authoritarian environments may try a more horizontal approach with the intent of being respectful, only to find out that children become disrespectful. Those of us who grew up in a more permissive home may try to become more vertical in our relationships with children and find that children rebel or become passive.

Effective discipline is both kind and firm at the same time. This makes sense to most of us, and in our best moments we are able to strike that balance. It’s in those moments of stress, however, that we gravitate to being either kind or firm in an attempt to control the situation. What usually causes stress for parents are situations where we don’t know what to do, and we know that we need to do something. The truth is that when we try to control a situation, it usually doesn’t work out too well, despite our best intentions. When we know what we can do, and have realistic solutions that are kind, firm and respectful, then we feel in control (and are in control). It is then that we can help the situation (and the child) rather than control it, and teach children valuable life skills.

Each month, “MYT for Kids” will provide kind, firm and respectful parenting solutions that will help you can use in your everyday experience with your children, helping them to become capable, confident and responsible young people. This month we will start with a short exercise that you can do to determine the effects of effective discipline.

1. What 10 characteristics would you give your child, if you could, that you believe would insure his or her success in life, both personally and professionally?
2. Think of a home that you know of (or remember) where the parenting style is authoritarian or vertical. Make a list of 10 characteristics that might be fostered in a child living in a home where there a high degree of firmness and a low degree of kindness.
3. Think of a home that you know of (or remember) where the parenting style is permissive or horizontal. Make a list of 10 characteristics that might be fostered in a child living in a home whose parenting style is high in kindness, but low in firmness.
4. Think of a home that you know of (or remember) where the parenting style is balanced, where the parents exhibit both a high degree of firmness, and a high degree of kindness. Make a list of 10 characteristics that might be fostered in children in that home.

My next article will begin introducing specific tools that will help you to be kind and firm at the same time!