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PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids ***Presented by:***
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“When Are You Ever Going to Learn to Take Care of Your Stuff?”

Kids and their toys. We can be sitting in relative order one minute, and before we can turn a page in the evening paper, the room is trashed.

Unfortunately, some parents can't blame their kids for not picking up their toys. Our kids will do as we do. Parents who trash their room with mounds of clothes draping the chairs usually raise children who want to act just like them.

In addition to caring for our own things, explaining how we feel when we pick things up sends a powerful message. Putting the dishes away, replacing the tools on their proper hooks, sweeping the sidewalks after mowing the grass - if we talk about it as we do it, and after we do it, our kids get the right message. A very effective father used to handle it this way, “Boy, it feels good to finish this job, but I won't feel great until I get this mess picked up.” As soon as he cleaned up, he would say, “Now I feel really great! Everything is in the right place.” He said this out loud giving his children an opportunity to eavesdrop.

Until our kids are 3- or 4-years old, cleaning up their toys should be a community project. We put a toy away, then they put a toy away, then we put a toy away, and so on. As children grow older, their toys become their responsibility. What happens to their belongings is up to them.

One parent handled the issue like this:

Parent: “Hey, Peter, there's a lot of your stuff laying around the house today. It's getting in the way. Do you want to pick it up or would you rather I picked it up?”

Peter: “You pick it up.”

Parent: “Well, if you pick it up, you get to see it again. So you might want to rethink your decision on that. But you don't have to rush. If, by lunchtime, I still see the stuff out there, I'll know you decided to have me pick it up. If I see it's gone, then I'll know you decided to pick it up.”

In the event the parent has to pick up the toys, the following discussion will probably result,

Peter: “Where's my stuff?”

Parent: “Gone.”

Peter: “Why?”

Parent: “We agreed that if it was still laying around at lunchtime that I was supposed to pick it up.”

The question then becomes, should we give the toys back? If our child is basically responsible, we say, “Every time you pick up all your toys by yourself without being told, you earn back one of those toys you lost today.” With kids who have a hard-core problem with responsibility, they should know they are gradually saying “so long” to the toys we have to pick up. Don't be afraid of saying from time to time, “You know, I'm really worried about the way you're taking care of your stuff. I'm thinking maybe you need to be a little older before you have that responsibility. So, I'm going to take this toy until I don't have to worry about how well you're taking care of it. Don't worry, you'll get another shot at being responsible for it.”

This is a great opportunity for the parent to solve the problem without anger or threats. It is also a great opportunity for the child to give this a lot of thought and have the chance to practice his/her responsibility.



Explaining how we feel when we take care of our things, sends a powerful message to kids