

DEL CERRO ELEMENTARY

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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Whining and Complaining

It's ten o'clock in the morning and Mikey wants a cookie. He knows he can't have one, but that doesn't stop him from asking.

"Mommy, I want a cookie," he whines, his little fist clutching a fold in Mom's skirt.

"Mikey, you know you can't have cookies between meals," Mom returns. "Now, run off and play."

"But Mommy, I want one," Mikey continues.

"You can have one at lunchtime. Now, off you go."

"Mommy, I don't want to wait. I want one now."

"Well, you can't have one."

And then it happens. There's something about parents who tolerate whining from their kids: eventually the parents whine back. "Will you stop that whin-n-n-ing?" Mom says. "I hate it when you whine like that."

No wonder Mikey whines like he does. He has a good teacher. The fact is, parents who spend a lot of time pleading with their children, raise kids who are experts at pleading themselves.

Oftentimes, just to get rid of that sing-songey record of complaint, we give up the battle and grudgingly fork over the cookie or whatever our child has been whining for. The message the child gets is that whining works.

The secret of handling whiney behavior is similar to that of dealing with disrespect. We must make it known to our child that he or she will get no results until the tone of voice changes.

Some effective school teachers fight whiney behavior with multiple-choice questions. "Do you suppose I'll be able to understand you better when you're whining, or not whining? Why don't you think about that. Come back when you've decided."

We can do the same. Saying, "When your voice sounds like mine, I'll be glad to talk with you," addresses the real problem with whining, which is the tone of voice the child uses. Whether or not Mikey can have a cookie will be discussed later, after the syrupy pleading stops.

Kids are nothing if not persistent. Sometimes saying, "I won't listen to you while you're whining," gives them the emotional feedback they're looking for and encourages them to keep on.

If we aren't getting results by asking them to leave, or if we find ourselves drawn into a discussion about it, then we can win the battle by ignoring the whining altogether. It is best, however, to explain this method before employing it. Sit the child down, when emotions are calm, and say, "Mikey, if we ever act like we don't hear you, it's not because we don't **want** to hear you. We'll respond when we hear you talk in the same tone of voice we talk in."

Parents have the best luck when they rehearse their reaction to whining until they hear themselves thinking, "I can't wait for little Jeff to whine. I hope he does it today so I can practice my new techniques. Come on kid, make my day!"



***Address the real problem with whining
- the tone of voice used***