



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



January 27, 2010 – Dealing with Defiant Children

Carol Skinner, PhD, is a child psychologist with MidStep Centers for Child Development and may be contacted at cls@midstep.com.

Is this your child? Does he respond “no” to, what seems to you, everything that is asked of him, including things that are in his best interest? Does your child refuse to do her basic chores around the house and refuse to do her homework? Or maybe your child blames everyone and everything for her circumstances and refuses to take any responsibility for her actions?

Dealing with defiant children can be a tremendous challenge for any parent. Even the most patient, laid back parent can be pushed to the edge dealing with these children. Here are a few tips to help parents know how to deal with their defiant children.

*Do your best to listen to and understand your child. Defiant children tend to be emotionally immature and often feel misunderstood. Listen honestly and sincerely to what they are saying, even if you don't agree with their perception, which is often faulty. When listening to your child, make sure you maintain eye contact and remove or turn off anything in the environment that may keep you from fully listening. After you have listened, restate in your own words what he has said. Don't criticize or interrupt. You will find that your understanding will reduce your child's defiance.

*Avoid yelling. Yelling only fuels the fire of defiance. Many parents feel that the only time their children obey is when they are yelled at. These children have become conditioned by their parents to respond only when yelled at, thus the parents need to break the cycle by asking once, reminding with a stated consequence for non-compliance, and then following through with stated consequence if the child does not comply.

*Give choices whenever possible. Defiant children often are fighting for power and control of their lives, so give them a little more control as they can handle it. One example is when you have asked your child several times to pick up his toys. He continues playing and ignores your request. Get down to his level and say “Here is your choice: you can either clean up your toys now or when (insert favorite TV show here) is on, which do you choose.” If your child continues to ignore your request or says “NO!” tell him: “Remember if you do not make a choice, I will choose for you”.

*Be consistent and follow through with stated consequences. The key here is to make sure that you are not threatening a consequence that you know that you can't follow through with. Example: telling a child that her consequence will be no TV for a week, when you know that you are not going to be home to monitor whether she watches TV or not.

This article is the first of several written by presenters who will be conducting workshops at the February 27 Focus on Strong Families Conference for Parents. For information on conference registration, call 231-1062.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*
Serving State College Area School District

Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer, 814-237-6191
dtaylor105@gmail.com

Web address: carecentreregion.org

Centre County *Communities That Care*

*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and
Philipsburg-Osceola*

Elizabeth Eckley, Community Mobilizer, 814-404-9511
centrecountyctc@yahoo.com

Web address: centrecountyctc.org