

NO MORE HOVERING. NO MORE ORDERING. HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PARENT

First of all, let me correct myself. A 600 word article will not make you an effective parent. However, as a follow up to last month's article on Helicopters, Drill Sergeants, and Consultants we will discuss how to change nonproductive behaviors we may all be guilty of and to find more effective and enjoyable ways to parent our children.

As we learned last month Helicopter parents hover, worry, and overprotect which leads to children learning they are not capable or they are all powerful. We also learned the Drill Sergeant Style leads to children who may fear or rebel or become bullies themselves. Both result in power struggles parents lose and both leave parents feeling responsible for their children's behaviors.

The Consultant parent uses collaboration, which allows the child to learn from mistakes, and stands back as their child explores their choices, boundaries, and limits. The difference between the first two parenting styles and the Consultant is ownership of the child's problems and behaviors. The first two parent styles take at least some if not all ownership. The Consultant parent allows the child to be the owner of their issues. This gives the child the implied message "You are capable of making good decisions". It lets them know you

trust them to handle their decisions and consequences. The child's self confidence increases. The other methods undermine self-esteem.

How do you become a consultant? Be prepared to be uncomfortable. Feeling uneasy is a good sign because it means you are trying to do something different!

Let's demonstrate with an example using the 3 styles. Parent and child are going to the store. Helicopter parent tries to put child in the cart and they say "NO!" Parent lets them walk. Child runs toward the candy aisle and parent runs after saying "Please stay with me". Child screams "I want Skittles!" Parent "Will you stay with me if I give you Skittles?" Child "Yes!" Parent "Okay, that's my good girl". Child grins. Drill Sergeant Parent puts child in the cart. Child screams. Parent "Stop that Right Now" Child cries. Parent "Stop crying or I will give you something to cry about!" Child stands in cart. Parent "Sit down or I will put you in the car by yourself!" Parent slaps the child on the leg to make the point. Child screams. The Consultant parent begins before they enter the store. "When we go in the store you have a choice. Would you like to walk next to me or sit in the cart?" The child chooses. The parent then says

This column sponsored by:



Affiliated Clinical Services Inc.
38 Sell Drive, Hartford WI 53027
262-673-0301

"While we are in the store it is important you stay with me to be safe. If you leave me we will talk about your choice." The child walks off. Parent goes to the child. "You decided to walk away which is not safe. Would you rather sit in the cart or shall we leave the store and try again another time?" If the child misbehaves again the parent then calmly leaves the store with him. The consultant parent knows this lesson is far more important than finishing shopping. They may even try again in an hour. By giving the child choices the parent can live with they have more power than the Helicopter or the Drill Sergeant. They are in control without the power struggle.

To be a Consultant parent it is important to take care of yourself so you feel confident and happy. Give your children choices you can live with. Finally take action and follow up so your children respect you and know your words are not empty.

At Affiliated Clinical Services the therapist are experts on this type of parent along with other effective ways to help you become the parent you want to be.