

Parenting with Love and Logic

Parenting with Love and Logic

Teaching Children Responsibility

UPDATED AND EXPANDED EDITION

Foster Cline, MD and Jim Fay





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*To all the parents and children (including our own!)
who were my teachers, and to my wife, Hermie, who gave support.*

—Foster

*To my wife, Shirley,
whose love, support, and wisdom have always been
a source of motivation and strength.*

—Jim

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Foreword to the Second Edition

We have been gratified to see the response that the world has given *Parenting with Love and Logic* and *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic*. Since these books were first published in 1990 and 1992, they have had twenty-six and seventeen printings respectively and have been translated into eight languages. Parents on six continents—all except Antarctica—have effectively embraced Love and Logic concepts. During these years since the first edition, we have happily collected success stories of parents who excitedly and proudly told us of raising their children with choices, consequences, and empathy, as taught in *Parenting with Love and Logic*.

While sales have continued to increase, it is apparent that the world has changed in many ways since the books were written. In those days, there was no instant messaging, no talking to strangers in chat rooms, no computer games. Toddlers didn't own plastic toys that took turns spouting off the alphabet, tutoring children on naming colors, and helping them learn to spell. Yet no matter the generation, good parenting boils down to loving and effective parent-child relationships and communication that engender respect and self-discipline.

Our goal in this second edition has not changed, but we have added information on how parents can specifically handle the new challenges our children face. This new information includes real-life examples of effective communication between parents and their kids.

We thank the parents who have told us how the principles here have helped them raise children who are equipped to make good decisions and who are loving, responsible, and fun to be around. We also thank those who have given us ideas and suggestions, some of which have been included in this edition.

Foster Cline and Jim Fay
March 2006

Introduction

For hundreds of years, rookie parents learned the fine points of child rearing by example: They took the techniques their parents had used on them and applied them to their own children. Today this approach is more apt to bomb than boom.

Many of us, when we meet failure in parenting, throw up our hands in frustration and say, “I can’t understand it. It worked for my dad!” Yes, it did. But things have changed. The human rights revolution, the communication explosion, the Internet, cell phones, changes in the nuclear family—these and many other factors have radically changed how our children view life. Kids are forced to grow up quicker these days, so they need to learn sooner how to cope with the tremendous challenges and pressures of contemporary life. The impact of rising divorce rates, single parents raising kids, blended families, and other changes in the family has been dramatic. Parents must learn to use different techniques with kids who live in today’s complex, rapidly changing world.

That’s where Parenting with Love and Logic comes in. Why the terms *love* and *logic*? Effective parenting centers around love: love that is not permissive, love that doesn’t tolerate disrespect, but also love that is powerful enough to allow kids to make mistakes and permit them to live with the consequences of those mistakes. Most mistakes do have logical consequences. And those consequences, when accompanied by empathy—our compassionate understanding of the child’s disappointment, frustration, and pain—hit home with mind-changing power.

This book is written in two parts. In the first, we will lay out our concepts on parenting in general terms, centering on building self-concept, separating problems, neutralizing anger and arguments, using thinking words and enforceable statements, offering choices, and locking in our empathy before our kids face the consequences of their mistakes. These are the building blocks of effective parenting. Part 1 also contains extra tidbits of information—“Love and Logic Tips”—which add flesh to the bone of many Love and Logic principles.

In the second part, we get practical. The forty-eight Love and Logic pearls offer everyday strategies for dealing with problems most parents

will face during the first twelve or so years of their children's lives. These pearls build on the general ideas developed in the first half of the book and should be used only after the first part has been read and understood.

Parenting with Love and Logic is not a foolproof system that works every time. No system can promise that. But it *is* a system that has a strong chance of working in most situations. Although Love and Logic is not a comprehensive system, it is a complete system. That is, although we have not written a thick tome containing every detail of parent-child relationship, how best to handle almost every issue can be gleaned from these pages. Parents will find success using the Love and Logic attitude. Once the attitude is mastered, handling most problems becomes second nature, even when a particular problem has not been explored. Our approach is more of an attitude that will allow our children to grow in maturity as they grow in years. It will teach them to think, to decide, and to live with their decisions. In short, it will teach them responsibility, and that's what parenting is all about. If we can teach our kids responsibility, we've accomplished a great portion of our parental task.

The Bible provides insight on many parenting issues. Much of what this book teaches is summarized beautifully in a familiar Old Testament proverb:

Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray. (Proverbs 22:6)

What greater gift can parents give their children than the opportunity for a joyful, productive, and responsible adult life? We believe that the principles of *Parenting with Love and Logic* will help achieve that result.

Part 1

The Love and Logic Parent

1

Parenting: Joy or Nightmare?

*A wise child loves discipline,
but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*

Proverbs 13:1

A mother and father stand outside of a restaurant in the rain asking their three-year-old, Chloe, to get in the car so the family can go home. Chloe refuses. Her parents spend the next fifteen minutes begging and pleading with her to do it on her own. At one point, the father gets down on his knees in the puddles, trying to reason her into the car. She finally complies, but only after her parents agree to buy her a soda on the way home. If they have to use a soda to buy her off at three, what will they be facing when she reaches sixteen?



Jim sits in the airport awaiting a flight, watching as a mother gives at least eighty different demands to her three-year-old boy over the course of an hour without ever enforcing one of them:

“Come back here, Logan!”

“Don’t go over there, Logan!”

“You better listen to me, Logan, or else!”

“I mean it, Logan!”

“Don’t run, Logan!”

“Come back here so you don’t get hurt, Logan!”

Logan eventually finds his way to where Jim is seated. The toddler smiles at him while ignoring his mother. The mother yells, “Logan, you

get away from that man! You get over here this instant!”

Jim smiles down at Logan and asks, “Hey, Logan, what is your mom going to do if you don’t get over there?”

He looks up and grins. “She not goin’ to do nothin’.” And then his eyes twinkle and his grin becomes wider.

It turns out he is right. She finally comes apologizing. “I’m sorry he’s bothering you, but you know how three-year-olds are. They just won’t listen to one thing you tell them.”



On a Saturday at a local supermarket, two boys—ages five and seven—have declared war. Like guerrillas on a raiding party, they sneak from aisle to aisle, hiding behind displays and squeaking their tennies on the tile floor. Then suddenly a crash—the result of a game of “shopping cart chicken”—pierces the otherwise calming background Muzak.

The mother, having lost sight of this self-appointed commando unit, abandons her half-filled cart. As she rounds a corner, her screams turn the heads of other shoppers: “Don’t get lost!” “Don’t touch that!” “*You*—get over here!” She races for the boys, and as she’s about to grab two sweaty necks, they turn to Tactic B: “the split up,” a twenty-first-century version of “divide and conquer.” Now she must run in two directions at once to shout at them. Wheezing with exertion, she corrals the younger one, who just blitzed the cereal section, leaving a trail of boxes. But when she returns him to her cart, the older boy is gone. She locates him in produce, rolling seedless grapes like marbles across the floor.

After scooping up Boy Number Two and carrying him back, you guessed it, she finds that Boy Number One has disappeared. Mom sprints from her cart once more. Finally, after she threatens murder and the pawning of their Nintendo game system, the boys are gathered.

But the battle’s not over. Tactic C follows: the “fill the cart when Mom’s not looking” game. Soon M&Ms, Oreos, vanilla wafers, and jumbo Snickers bars are piled high. Mom races back and forth reshelving the treats. Then come boyish smirks and another round of threats from Mom: “Don’t do that!” “I’m going to slap your hands!” And in a cry of desperation: “You’re never going to leave the house again for the rest of your lives!”

Frazzled, harried, and broken, Mom finally surrenders and buys off her precious flesh and blood with candy bars—a cease-fire that guarantees enough peace to finish her rounds.

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Ah, yes, parenting—the joys, the rewards. We become parents with optimism oozing from every pore. During late-night feedings and sickening diaper changes, we know we are laying the groundwork for a lifelong relationship that will bless us when our hair turns gray or disappears. We look forward to times of tenderness and times of love, shared joys and shared disappointments, hugs and encouragement, words of comfort, and soul-filled conversations.

But the joys of parenting were far from the minds of the parents in the previous stories. No freshly scrubbed cherubs flitted through their lives, hanging on every soft word dropping from Mommy’s or Daddy’s lips. Where was that gratifying, loving, personal relationship between parent and child? The sublime joys of parenting were obliterated by a more immediate concern: survival.

This was parenting, the nightmare.

Scenes like these happen to the best of us. When they do, we may want to throw our hands in the air and scream, “Kids! Are they worth the pain?” Sometimes kids can be a bigger hassle than a house with one shower. When we think of the enormous love we pump into our children’s lives and then the sassy, disobedient, unappreciative behavior we receive in return, we can get pretty burned out on the whole process. Besides riddling our lives with day-to-day hassles, kids present us with perhaps the greatest challenge of our adulthood: raising our children to be responsible adults.

Through the miracle of birth, we are given a tiny, defenseless babe totally dependent on us for every physical need. We have a mere eighteen years at most to ready that suckling for a world that can be cruel and heartless. That child’s success in the real world hinges in large part on the job we do as parents. Just thinking about raising responsible, well-rounded kids sends a sobering shiver of responsibility right up the old parental spine. Many of us have felt queasy after a thought such as

this: If I can't handle a five-year-old in a grocery store, what am I going to do with a fifteen-year-old who seems to have an enormous understanding of sex and is counting the days until he gets a driver's license?

Putting the Fun Back into Parenting

All is not so bleak. Trust us! There's hope, shining beacon bright, at the end of the tunnel of parental frustration. Parenting doesn't have to be drudgery. Children can grow to be thinking, responsible adults. We can help them do it without living through an eighteen-year horror movie.

Parenting with Love and Logic is all about raising responsible kids. It's a win-win philosophy. Parents win because they love in a healthy way and establish control over their kids without resorting to the anger and threats that encourage rebellious teenage behavior. Kids win because they learn responsibility and the logic of life by solving their own problems. Thus, they acquire the tools for coping with the real world.

Parents and kids can establish a rewarding relationship built on love and trust in the process. What a deal! Parenting with Love and Logic puts the fun back into parenting.