

Temperament, Self-Regulation, Reactivity And Effortful Control

During infancy and toddlerhood children show individual differences in the type and level of emotional reaction, activity level, attention, and emotional self-regulation. These differences make up a child's temperament. Effortful control is the regulatory dimension of temperament, involves voluntarily suppressing a dominant, reactive response in order to plan and execute a more adaptive response (Berk, 2008, p. 261). The first two years are vitally important to the overall development of self regulation. According to Berk (2008, p. 258), emotional self-regulation refers to the strategies we use to adjust our emotional state to a comfortable level of intensity so we can accomplish our goals (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). Self-regulation improves as the cerebral cortex grows and through caregiver guidance. Self-regulation and effortful control are important skills for the young child. Self regulation aids a child's development cognitively and socially allowing a child to gain independence. Berk states (2008, p. 258), poorly regulated toddlers are likely to be delayed in mental development and to have behavior problems in the preschool years and are at risk for long-lasting problems (Eisenberg et al., 2004bb; Lawson & Ruff, 2004). Reactivity refers to quickness and intensity of emotional arousal, attention, and motor activity. Self-regulation refers to strategies that modify that reactivity (Berk, 2008, p. 260). Interestingly, psychologists believe childhood traits lay the foundation of the adult personality.

Application

Compassionate discipline includes understanding and sympathizing with your child's feelings while maintaining the firmness your child needs to better direct his own behavior (Lancer, 1996, p. 160). According to Bob Lancer (1996, p. 164), there are three disciplinary options: conscious detachment, natural consequences, 1-2-3 warning and consequence system. During conscious detachment remove your attention from your child while she misbehaves, to teach that poor behavior does not achieve the reward of making her the center of attention. Natural consequences are related to an unpleasant consequence his behavior brings upon himself. 1-2-3 warning and consequence system allows the child

time to choose how his/she will react. Basic guidelines for effectively administering your disciplinary options include the following:

1. Maintain your peace and poise in response to your child's behavior.
2. Consistently use the 1-2-3 Warning System before issuing a consequence.
3. Consistently follow through on the consequences you issue.
4. Do not strain yourself or undermine your authority by arguing or using force.
5. Consistently demonstrate your unconditional love and acceptance of the child's true self.
6. Have discussions at another time, when the child is not upset.

Bob Lancer summarizes by stating (1996, p. 165), achieving better results with your child requires nothing more and nothing less than your own continuing growth process. This is the key to parenting with love.

Reference

Berk, L. (2008). *Infants and children*. Boston: Pearson.

Lancer,B. (1996). *Parenting with love without anger or stress*. Marietta: Parenting Solutions.

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