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My Kids are Driving Me Crazy!

By Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC

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When you conduct parent workshops, you start to see the same issues coming up over and over for parents. The names and faces are different, but the issues are the same. And the truth is that parents are often responsible for many of these problems.

Here are three issues that keep coming up for parents, and an explanation of how parents can often solve their own problems.

Problem #1: My kids don't listen to me

To expect that kids will listen to you perfectly all the time is an irrational thought. Kids are in a very different place than adults are in terms of their ability to listen and attend to things. Kids will often need you to repeat things a number of times in a patient, pleasant tone. And yes, your job is to be very patient with them.

It is often the "parental" tone of parents' voices that is part of the problem with kids not listening. After all, who wants to be lectured about what to do all day? If things still don't work, take action—kids will respond to action much better than they will to words.

Problem #2: My kids aren't respectful—they talk back and argue too much

One of the problems with not having obedient kids anymore is that kids feel more freedom to speak their mind. This can be irritating, but it's far better than obedient kids that just do what they're told.

If your child talks to you in a disrespectful way, you have choices. One choice is to be angry with them and to actually create more of the very behavior that you dislike. Getting angry when your child talks back to you is a great example of creating your own problems.

A better choice is to ask them what's bothering them in a compassionate way. Kids will often take out their feelings on someone who they feel safe with—you! And remember that you can tell them in a

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calm and firm manner that it's not OK to talk to you that way.

Arguing is a choice for parents. It still takes two to tango. Most parents who complain about their kids arguing are pretty good at it themselves. You may disagree often with your kids, but arguments can usually be avoided if parents can stay disciplined.

Problem #3: My kids aren't achieving as well as they should

Whether it's tying their shoes, getting better grades, or success at sports, parents will always be worried about how well their kids are doing compared to other kids. While there certainly are situations that require extra help and support, most of the extreme concern about your child's development is a problem in itself. When parents worry about their child's capability, it sends a powerful message to this

child. Remember that Einstein and Edison were poor students!

The responsibility of parents is to believe in their child's ability to succeed and to set high expectations for them. The rest is to be patient and to be aware of your own insecurities. It is these insecurities that may be part of the reason your child isn't doing well.

While it's easy to point fingers at your kids, remember the old saying: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

Parents who attend to their own issues first will find far fewer "rotten apples" in their tree.

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, coaches men to be better fathers and husbands. He is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" <http://www.markbrandenburg.com/father.htm> For more great tips and action steps for fathers, sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>.

Advantages Of Professional Drivers' Instruction

By Pat Murphy

Having a driver's license is one of the major status symbols among high school students and teenagers, in general. Aside from being a "coolness" asset, a driver's license also provides kids with a sense of independence by providing them with the right to drive on their own. Though most kids can't wait to get behind the wheel, some schools do not offer drivers education. As a result, most kids learn to drive on their own, through peers, or other unqualified instructors. This puts the kids' safety at risk because they are at the phase when they are most impressionable. They are prone to picking up unsafe driving habits, wrong information, and false confidence from these instructors. This is extremely risky, as most teen accidents are traced from this equation. The American Automobile Association or the AAA actually states that although the teen driving population is relatively small (7%), they account for at least 14% of all fatal motor accidents. These figures make the need for competent driving schools and drivers education urgent.

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There are many advantages in enrolling in a drivers course handled by a professional instructors. Instructors from driving schools and drivers education provides objective observations and instructions about the students' driving abilities. Students are not saddled with instructions that are full of vague notions about driving, or about how a certain maneuver is done. Professional instructors are also able to give valuable and useful advice how to handle practice sessions with qualified supervisors. Furthermore, instructors address and discuss issues about the student's driving techniques to the supervisors which make for a comprehensive and coordinated training. Aside from teaching maneuvers and gear shifting, instructors also teach updated road safety precautions and traffic laws. They help students understand how certain laws apply to in-road situations. In short, professional instructors prepare you both for safe driving and road responsibility.

Another advantage in enrolling at driving schools and drivers education courses is the opportunity to receive honest assessment of driving skills from the professionals. They identify areas and skills which need improvement and constantly call students' attention to the problems they spotted. As a result, bad habits are eradicated before they actually start. Plus, professional instructors usually give summaries and written reviews of the students' skills that are useful for private practice time with qualified supervisors. Driving schools and drivers courses provide structured and systematic training which builds and develops the students' skills bit by bit. There is no rush to learn one maneuver to another before the first move is mastered. The students actually learn and understand driving basics before tackling more complicated lessons. Exposure to other lecturers and providers of road safety is a bonus from professional drivers education. Visiting lecturers usually include firemen, the local mechanic, paramedic, police, and towing service personnel. They provide seminars wherein students learn what to do in accidents and driving emergencies.

Lastly, an advantage often sought at driving schools and drivers education courses are the mock drivers' exams. These prepare the students for taking that all-important test and refresh their driving knowledge. Aside from this, there are also new policies that allow only students who have professional training to take driving tests and apply for driver's licenses. The purveyors of the laws see this as an extra measure needed to ensure the safety of the teen drivers, other motorists, and the pedestrians from irresponsible driving.

For more valuable information on Driving Schools and Drivers Education, please visit

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