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Smiling and Willing They Do Their Chores! It Could Happen
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Give in once or twice and look out! All parents have done it. No quarters for the bubblegum machine. Well, except for this once. You were so tired, and they were so good they deserved a treat. As a parent, there is no bigger mistake!

When you gave them the quarter, you basically told them that there was something they could do to get the quarter. The problem is they don't know exactly what they did to get it. So, for the next 2000 visits to the store, they try everything they can think of. "That temper tantrum at the store entrance way just wasn't big enough last time. I'll have a bigger one this time!"

It's not a conscious process on their part. But it's real and strong.

The human animal needs to feel safe. Food, shelter, and water are our basic needs for survival. In society, in the family, on a team, in the classroom, our most basic psychological need is to be an accepted member of the pack. The human animal is very much a pack animal. We need to know what our position in the pack is, and we need to know what the rules are.

We only feel safe when we know what the rules are. If the rules are clear, strong, and unwavering then we feel completely safe and are happy, cooperative, and productive. If the rules are unclear, or we know that they can be broken, we don't feel safe-everyone in the pack will become surly, obstinant, and irresponsible.

These are defensive behaviors. We only get defensive when we don't feel safe. If you have rules, but they are not being enforced, you are a big part of the problem. And you will be leading a very unruly pack. If one rule is broken just a couple of times, everyone in the pack will start to push all the rules. If you let them get away with:

- * bullying someone just once
- * swearing, just once
- * taking something without asking
- * speaking out of turn
- * not picking up after themselves
- * being unkind to a sibling

- * not doing their homework
- * being disrespectful to an adult
- * not using good table manners
- * going to bed late
- * not doing their chores
- * getting a quarter bubblegum!

These inappropriate behaviors will continue and get worse because they're trying to figure out what the rule really is. Understand, they are not pushing the rules to push them over! Many of us make that assumption, "They want to see what they can get away with." WRONG! They want to know what the rules are, so they can feel safe! They push and push and push to get you to set and enforce the rules, so they can feel safe.

Our home used to be very unsafe. Their father and I knew that we could be doing many things better. We would discuss it. We would decide on a new rule. We would tell them what the new rule was. Within minutes, hours, or days we would forget about the new rule. The kids learned very early on that any rule could change at a moment's notice, that no rule was ever enforced consistently, and they never felt safe.

Their feeling of not being safe was clear in their non-cooperation, tantrums, not even telling us they had homework (much less doing it!), and constant sibling bickering. We were angry and yelling to get them to do everything (and they didn't).

The magic formula was simple, but took some determination to implement. We had to mend our ways. No matter how tired or lazy we were feeling, we had to enforce the rules.

- * We do all house chores together.
- * 'Stupid' is never used.
- * Everyone sits together for dinner.
- * Homework is done immediately after school.

The rules for your pack (family, classroom, or team) will be different than ours, but they have to be solid and unwavering. Write them down, so you can refer back to them and remember them.

And "Yes" you do discipline kids who break the rules. Figure out the five most important privileges that you are willing to take away from each of your children. These privileges can only be suspended for a maximum of one week, but they can all be taken away at the same time for severe offenses.

Our teenager can lose the following:

1. Freedom (he must accompany mom or dad everywhere).

2. Allowance.
3. Reading (he devours books whole!)
4. Electronics (TV and computer)
5. Friends.

These are listed in no specific order. The lists are different for each child are posted on the fridge.

We had immediate results with this strategy. They knew what to expect for bad behavior. We (read 'mom') stopped making irrational threats with which we never followed through (You're grounded for 18 years!) We stopped getting overly upset when the kids misbehaved because we had set disciplines.

As you strengthen the rules for your pack, and stop giving in, everyone will feel safer, and their defensive behaviors will disappear.

My kids no longer question the rules. They never change. They do their chores with a smile. Yours will, too.

Consistency? This is it.

Calgary author Jeanette Kasper is an acclaimed professional speaker who's Canadian BEST SELLER, Anger is NOT an Emotion, is revolutionizing how we deal with others. This unique perspective on human behavior gives us an understanding of how people relate to each other that leads naturally to using the over 300 solutions Mrs. Kasper gives in her book.

As a best-selling author, international professional speaker, and syndicated columnist, Jeanette is always willing to answer your questions, give interviews, and do a training session with your company, association, or parenting group. Jeanette concentrates on helping others create harmonious relationships at work, home, and play.