



## PERMISSION TO PARENT November 2005

As odd as it may sound, sometimes parents need to be reminded that as parents, they have the right to parent their child/children. What does this mean? Children can become excellent manipulators. They can whine and cajole their parents into thinking that they (the parent) are being unfair or that the child really "needs" this thing when that is not the reality. Sometimes a suggestion to a parent will again "give them permission" to parent their child.

Many of these suggestions work best if started early in the child's life. It then becomes a pattern. However, it is never too late to get permission to parent. It may come at a difficult time or be centered around a difficult issue, but with perseverance, it can be done!

One of the very important rules to teach a child is to accept "no" as the answer. **NO WHINING OR DISCUSSION!** For some things, the answer is just plain no. And as the parent, don't use "no" when the answer could be "yes" or "maybe." If you say no, stick to it; don't say it if you are going to change your mind.

Other situations that come up may include:

- Permission to look in your child's room, especially if you have a gut feeling that they may be hiding something. Let your child know that you will do this on occasion...when you are picking up, getting the laundry together, or when their behavior suggests you need to do this. They are living under your roof and as a minor, you are responsible for them. Therefore, you need to know what they are involved in.
- Permission to contact parents of your child's friends. Call to see if the kids are really at their house. Do the parents know there is a party planned at their home on the weekend? Will they be there and be actively monitoring the party? What are their attitudes about alcohol and drug use? What will the kids be doing?
- Permission to grant and deny privileges based on behaviors. Have regular discussions with children about how they earn privileges and what kind of behavior can result in restrictions. Be fair, age appropriate, and consistent.
- Permission to let a child suffer the consequences of their behavior. As much as parents want to save their child from painful experiences, children need to learn to be accountable for their actions. Parents don't need to "fix" everything for their kids. Let the kids figure out how to "fix" it.
- Permission to tell your child you are the parent and "this is not a democracy." Some decisions and rules are made unilaterally.
- Permission to set and enforce rules and boundaries. Kids need them and, even though they would never admit it, they want them. Restrict screen time...both TV and computer. Curfews are good. Vehicle use is a privilege. So is cell phone use.
- Permission to be a parent, not a friend. Children won't like many of your decisions and, in turn, think they don't like you. But friendship with your children will develop in later years and will come out of a strong foundation based on respect and understanding.
- Permission to ask questions. You have the right to know.
- Permission to demand respect for yourself, other family members, other adults and others in general.
- Permission to not share everything with your child. Many children are put in the position of taking on lots of adult worries and concerns. Some things are better not shared with kids.
- Permission not to be "guilted" into giving in.
- Permission to listen to your "gut instinct," not your child's.

Parenting is one tough job. It takes time and commitment to be consistent and set and enforce rules and boundaries with your children. But it is okay, and necessary, even though you may fall out of favor with your child and be "the only mom or dad in the world" to say or do what you know you need to. If you aren't sure what you are doing, ask someone, like another parent, a school counselor or your faith leader. You'll be surprised at how much support you have!

