

When
Your Kid
Is
Hurting

Helping Your Child
through the Tough Days

Dr. Kevin Leman

Five Top To-Dos for Parents

- Tell the truth in love. Bad things happen to good people. It's a fact of life.
- Acknowledge that life isn't always fair or just.
- Balance your protective instinct with preparing your child for life on their own.
- Don't promote the victim mentality. It negatively shapes a child's worldview.
- Approach all life lessons as a learning experience.

Six Traits of a Healthy Home

- Hurts are acknowledged and addressed, not ignored.
- All members are held accountable, respect each other, and contribute to the family.
- The truth is told in love and not minimized.
- The values of courage, perseverance, responsibility, self-discipline, kindness, compassion, shared beliefs, honesty, loyalty, and a strong work ethic are an unshakable foundation.
- Problems are proactively and kindly addressed with creative solutions that fit the situation.
- Unconditional love and support reign.

Are You a Flaw Picker? Take This Quiz.

- I can see the lint on the carpet across the room.
- I can always think of a better way for someone to do a project.
- I'm a perfectionist in my work.
- I like to do things myself, because then they'll be done right.
- I like to be in charge, calling the shots.
- I tend to see flaws in people before I identify their good points.
- I'm harder on myself than I am on other people.

If you answered yes to any of the above, you're a flaw picker. Although you're toughest on yourself, you also expect your kids to toe the line. But what do your perfectionism and critical eye say to your kids? How do those translate to them? Here's what they think:

"I'll never be good enough, perfect enough, to make my parent happy."

"Anything I do is never good enough. So why bother?"

Your critical eye produces either a rebellious child who thinks, *Well, I'll show you and give you a run for your money*, or a self-defeated, lethargic child who thinks, *I can't do anything right, so I won't do anything at all. It's easier just to let my parents call the shots.*

It's time to back off, Mr. or Ms. Flaw Picker. Even if you learned your patterns from your own parents (most flaw pickers do), it doesn't mean you have to do and say what they did to your own kids.

Now that you've identified what you're doing, it is possible to change. An old dog can learn new tricks. You just have to work a little harder to unlearn old habits.

You can do it. I believe in you.

Are You an Enabler? Take This Quiz.

- People tell me I have a kind heart.
- I am easily persuaded.
- I find myself tired easily from multiple demands.
- I have a lot of compassion for others.
- I tend to believe everything people say.
- I try to make everybody happy. Then I'm happy.
- I want to please others.
- I usually do what people ask.

If any combination of these factors is true for you, you're an enabler. It's also highly likely that you're a woman, since your relational nature can easily slide this direction. You go out of your way, often at your own expense, to ease the road for your child. You do things for her that she could and should do for herself. But picking up the reins and driving her horse cart is hindering her development. It's time to stop being her ultimate fixer.

Seven Realities Kids Need to Face . . . for Their Own Good

- Bad things happen, even to good people.
- Life isn't always fair.
- You have to live with the hand you're dealt.
- You aren't the only person on the planet.
- Facing hardships together is better than trying to go it solo. Two are stronger than one. We can face anything together.
- B doesn't happen before A is completed. We're going to finish what we started.
- Your attitude *does* make all the difference in whether you'll win or lose in life.

The Four Goals of Misbehavior¹

Stage 1: Attention. "I only count when I'm being noticed or served."

Stage 2: Power. "I only count when you do what I want or I can do what I want."

These first two levels represent 99 percent of children who are hurting.

Stage 3: Revenge. "I only count if I can hurt others as I've been hurt by life."

Stage 4: Display of inadequacy / assumed disability. "I can't do anything right, so I won't try to do anything at all. I'm no good."

The Enabler Parent

- overprotects the child
- speaks for the child
- reacts to emotional outbursts
- tries to “fix” things
- makes excuses for the child’s behavior
- does what the child should do for themselves

The Distant Parent

- withdraws from the child
- may deny that the situation exists
- thinks the child is mature enough to handle this on their own
- pronounces what the child should do
- dismisses feelings
- lectures instead of listens
- thinks behaviors are all passing phases

The Helpful Parent

- is authentic and honest about the truth
- listens and doesn’t judge
- is compassionate, affirming, and supportive
- responds instead of reacts
- stays calm
- lets reality reign instead of parental lectures

Eight Ways to Help Your Child

- Don't panic.
- Respond, don't react.
- Listen, listen, and listen again.
- Don't judge.
- Provide comfort. You are their psychological blankie.
- What you say matters. Think before you say anything.
- Stay calm.
- Communicate that you're going to get through this together.

TOP 10 PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING LIFE'S HURTS WELL

1. Realize that feelings are not right or wrong. They're simply what your child feels.
2. Acknowledge the hurt and the reason for the grief—the elephant in the room.
3. Tell the truth in a straightforward, loving way instead of providing a la-la land experience.
4. Remember that children grieve differently than adults.
5. Don't promote a victim mentality that will shape your child's worldview negatively. Instead, approach hurting and injustice as a learning experience.
6. Teach your children when to endure, stay, and fight, and when to run away for their own safety.
7. Provide an always-listening ear and a nonjudgmental heart.
8. Give your child age-appropriate ownership of the solutions.
9. Be a realistic champion and encourager. Tell your child, "Rough things happen in life, but I believe in you. You can rise above this situation."
10. Focus on growing a loving, supportive parent-child relationship. If your children are safe and secure in your home, they can overcome nearly anything tossed their way.

NOTES

Chapter 1 “Out There” Issues

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Notes

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4. “Males and Eating Disorders,” NIH Medline Plus, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://medlineplus.gov/magazine/issues/spring08/articles/spring08pg18.html>.

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Chapter 4 Why Grief Serves a Purpose

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RESOURCES BY DR. KEVIN LEMAN

Nonfiction Books for Adults

The Birth Order Book

Making Children Mind without Losing Yours

Have a New Kid by Friday

Have a New Husband by Friday

Have a New Teenager by Friday

The Way of the Shepherd (written with William Pentak)

Have a New You by Friday

Have a New Sex Life by Friday

Have a Happy Family by Friday

Planet Middle School

Education a la Carte

The Way of the Wise

Be the Dad She Needs You to Be

What a Difference a Mom Makes

Parenting the Powerful Child

Under the Sheets

Sheet Music

It's Your Kid, Not a Gerbil!

Resources by Dr. Kevin Leman

Born to Win

Sex Begins in the Kitchen

7 Things He'll Never Tell You . . . But You Need to Know

What Your Childhood Memories Say about You

Running the Rapids

Becoming the Parent God Wants You to Be

Becoming a Couple of Promise

*A Chicken's Guide to Talking Turkey with Your Kids about
Sex (written with Kathy Flores Bell)*

First-Time Mom

Step-parenting 101

Living in a Stepfamily without Getting Stepped On

The Perfect Match

Be Your Own Shrink

Stopping Stress before It Stops You

Single Parenting That Works

Why Your Best Is Good Enough

Smart Women Know When to Say No

Fiction: The Worthington Destiny Series, with Jeff Nesbit

A Perfect Ambition

A Powerful Secret

A Primary Decision

Books for Children, with Kevin Leman II

My Firstborn, There's No One Like You

My Middle Child, There's No One Like You

Resources by Dr. Kevin Leman

My Youngest, There's No One Like You
My Only Child, There's No One Like You
My Adopted Child, There's No One Like You
My Grandchild, There's No One Like You

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