

February 2006

Topic:

Cinderella Teaches Us a Lesson on Respect

My daughter Anna is 6 years old and I am getting frustrated with how disrespectful she can treat me. Last night is a typical example. I was reading 'Cinderella', her favourite bedtime story, when the phone rang. It was a call I felt I should take and within minutes she was poking me with her Cinderella Barbie (she holds her while we read) and being very rude. Then she stormed to her room and put a sign on her door "No Dad". I don't want my daughter to grow up disrespectful – what should I have done?

All Behaviour Serves a Purpose

Don't focus on the behaviour, scratch the surface and you will discover the belief behind the behaviour. Deal with that, and the need for the behaviour disappears – just like magic! (In other words, understand what your daughter believes to be true and help her with that. When children feel better they do better.)

My guess is Anna felt hurt and disrespected when you took the phone call during her special story time with you. The message she got was that the person on the phone was more important than she was. Not unlike how we would feel at work if a colleague started taking calls in the middle of an important meeting. As you can see the pumpkin doesn't fall far from the patch!

When our feelings are hurt our reflex is to retaliate and get even. When we are 'hurting in' we 'hurt out', as simple as that. So she hurt your feelings by poking you and interrupting. When that didn't work she did the ultimate revenge she rejected you and withdrew her love – "No Dad".

Smart Solutions

Take Responsibility for Our Behaviour

Whenever our children are behaving disrespectfully to us it is best to first reflect on what may have precipitated the behaviour. Could I have contributed to this by treating them

The Parenting Network <mailto:info@parentingnetwork.ca>

92 Cheritan Avenue, Toronto, ON. Canada M4R 1S6 | phone 416 480 2499 | Fax 416 480 9977

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disrespectfully? Remember it is Anna's perception that rules. If she believed you didn't care or value her time with you then she feels justified in being hurtful back. Tit for tat.

Set the Record Straight

Check in with Anna and verify her possible interpretation. *"Could it be Anna that I hurt your feelings when I talked on the phone during our storytime?"* Listen to what she has to say.

Show her you now understand the purpose to her behaviour. *"Tell me, is that why you poked me and interrupted my call? You wanted to show me your feelings were hurt?"*

Apologize for your behaviour. *"I am sorry I hurt your feelings, that was not my intention. I love our storytime together. I made a mistake."* This is great modeling. You are taking responsibility for your role in the conflict. This will help Anna feel more comfortable in taking responsibility for her actions.

Show Respect

Storytime is your special date with Anna and it is important that she believes you value and respect your time with her. *"Anna let's decide how we are going to handle phone calls during storytime from now on."*

The most obvious solution is to let the answering machine take a message – after all that is why we have them!

P.S. If occasionally you are expecting an important call she will understand - just treat her with respect and give her that information ahead of time.

Magic Wand

Dad unfortunately life isn't like the fairytale Cinderella – there is no magic wand. However there is no need to panic because we can teach our children how to have respectful relationships. So I invite you to embrace an attitude of 'Dual Faith' in your relationships.

Show faith that Anna is very capable of being a respectful and caring member of society. As well, have faith in yourself. You are capable of providing her with respectful and caring guidance. And this is a great place to start - explore our choices and develop our skills so that we can do our personal best for our children.

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So sprinkle a little faith around and watch it grow.

Beverley