

Ask Wisely To Avoid Frustrations!

What is a question that likely will result in frustration for all concerned?

The question that usually results in frustration is: “Why did you do that?” (or some variation thereof). Use of the word “why” will put most children on the defensive, evoke unintended emotions and take everyone down the path of further straining the relationship.

Children are usually asked questions to seek information that will assist the adult in making reasoned decisions related to the matters of concern. Asking “why” will not only put a child on the defensive, but most of the time they really don’t know “why” they did something. Behaviors have multiple causations that are frequently quite complex. Adults often really don’t know “why” they did something, so it is expecting too much of a child to be able to answer this question. If you look at it closely, most of the time adults give excuses rather than true causes of their behaviors.

The question “Why did you do that?” is usually perceived by the child as being accusatory and will elicit an emotional response even if the child’s emotions are not already churning. Many times questions such as this are directed towards a child when she/he is already emotional and so only further escalates the intensity of feelings.

When “feeling churn, head goes into neutral” A rational, thoughtful response just will not come out of the mouth of a child who is emotionally upset. Neither will a child’s behavior become calmer if they feel they are being accused of something or if they are feeling helpless.

It is always best to allow a child to calm. Then, by using “reflective listening”, reflect the feeling state or emotions of the child. Only after the communication bond has been established, should you proceed with questions such as “can you tell me what happened?”, “what led up to this, etc.?”, “what was going on at the time, etc.?” or if friend Johnny was there: “If I were to ask Johnny what happened, what would he say?” By depersonalizing the situation or incident you are more likely to get the information you need in order to make reasoned adult responses to the issues of concern.

In the strategic implementation section of Distinctive Parenting, the following points are stressed which can also be applied to “Ask Wisely To Avoid Frustrations”:

1. Doing The Best Thing,
2. In The Best Place,
3. In The Best Way,
4. At The Best Time.

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