

SETTING PARENTS FREE

DR JOHN L COX



LIVE OAK
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES, P.A.

1151 North State Street, Suite 212
Jackson, Mississippi 39202
601-352-7398

Johncoxpsychology.com Podcast: Good Enough Living

Setting Parents Free

Dr. John L. Cox

I'm tired of parents being stressed out, so this weekend (and in the book) my goal is to speak to you, the parents. Yes, this conference is about what your kids need, but it's about what you need as well.

To set you free this weekend, I want to give you **two simple things**.

The first thing that parents need in order to feel free is to know that your kids are **getting what they need**. Otherwise you're going to worry about them, right? And that's not freedom! So I want this conference to help teach you how you can give good things to your kids' lives and hearts. I want you to come away this weekend feeling more competent and heads-up about how to care for your kids. The freedom to enjoy being a parent partially comes from knowing what you're doing.

Now if you are like me, we can't stop there. If all we did this weekend was talk about what your kids need to grow up happy, healthy, and groovy, you still aren't free. You just have a new set of rules to follow – a new standard to live up to!

So, secondly, we are also going to have to talk about how to handle it when you **screw it all up. Fall on your face. Fail**. Because you will. And I want that to stop being scary.

In other words, I want to teach you how to **give to your kids** and then teach you how to **handle it when you goof it up**. In fact, I want to talk about how we can handle our mistakes in such a way that not only will keep our screwups from damaging our kids, but might also actually *help them out!* Regular ole humans actually make pretty good parents – once we get set free.

This weekend we are going to look at Seven Questions that parents often ask.

We are going to overview them on Friday night, and then look at two in detail on Saturday morning.

Am I screwing up my kids?

Parents live under a new "legalism" that says you'd better parent perfectly, or else.

The good news is that parenting isn't just a TASK, it's a RELATIONSHIP!

We will talk about how we normal screwed up parents can reach back and repair with our kids. (Like we do in all relationships) When we do that, we're not only fixing our mistakes, we are teaching our kids about a deeper love. A love that is strong enough to endure our failings and theirs.

The fun thing is that the research backs this up!

Pediatrician, D. W. Winnicott observed that the coolest kids had parents who were just **people** with their kids. He called them "**Good Enough**".

We'll talk about how that works.

How do I make sure my kids know they are loved?

The kind of love we are talking about here is not touchy feely, special snowflake affection. We are going to be talking about how to build in our kids that grounding “battery pack” of **MATTERING**, that helps them feel whole and loved in their lives.

We’ll talk about how we teach Love in different ways, at different developmental stages. Different aged kids have different “love languages”, so to speak.

With an Infant

BONDING and NURTURE

Hold them and love them. Parent-infant, “eye to eye” holding and connecting.

And

When they are **distressed**, how can we help them become **undistressed**?

With a Toddler

We need to **MIRROR** and **EMBRACE** all their **new abilities**

And

SET LIMITS on them **without being angry.**

In other words...

Love their independence and their freedom.

Limit their independence and their freedom.

With a School Age Child

EMPOWERING them in all their **OUTSIDE THE FAMILY** adventures.

“You need to handle this, man...and I know that you can!”

And

EMPATHY with how hard and unfair life can be.

“Man! Nothing hurts like a friend’s rejection. We love you.”

With Teens

LIMITS that mirror adult life without being controlling and shame-based.

and

INTERACTIONS WITH THEM that treat them like a **PERSON**...not a child.

Stepping out of our role as just a parent and talking **WITH** them. No evaluation, just interaction.

How do I get my kids to do what I say?

Historically, parents who are trying to “make their kids obey” default to one of two ineffective techniques.

We are going to call them **CODDLING** and **CONTROL**.

Short answer: They don’t work. We’ll talk about why.

Our **new beginning point** is this:

Kids aren’t born with the understanding and the ability to bend the knee and obey.

And we can’t coddle or control them into doing so.

But we can **TEACH** them!

In fact, we are going to call this new method of child motivation **TEACHING DISCIPLINE**.

Teaching Discipline is basically about **teaching the CAUSE-EFFECT relationship of CHOICES and CONSEQUENCES in Reality**.

What is **REALITY** like?

In reality I don't **have** to drive the speed limit.

But if I don't.....the highway patrol might ‘dock my allowance’.

I don't **have** to pay taxes.

But if I don't.....I might have to ‘go to time out" (for 5 to 10...)

In other words, we all have to learn the following principle.

You can have anything you want in life...You just have to pay for it!

So in a discipline scenario....

1. Smell out the power struggle. (When your child challenges your authority AND you attempt to prove it)
2. Instead...back up...stop trying to control them (you can’t control anybody).
3. and give them a **CHOICE** (IF....THEN)
4. Let them choose
5. **FOLLOW THROUGH!!**

Now discipline is now longer attempting to **CONTROL** our children into behaving.

It is about **TEACHING** them to choose wisely and develop an “internal parent” that teaches them to make wise choices, both now and in adult life.

What if my kids don't WANT to do what I say?

In other words, obedience is not just about **behavior**. We also need to talk about helping our children's HEARTS learn to **Submit**.

Basically, we are all born **wanting things to go our way**.
(Have you ever met a selfless infant?)

And part of our job as parents is to help our kids **Grow up** and be strong. But we also must help them learn to **Grow Down** (into the humble place of submission) Helping them get off the throne in their lives.

However, we need to help them **LEARN** to submit rather than just **EXPECTING** them to do it. Again, we **TEACH IT**.

Here's the secret. We foster heart submission when we **LOVINGLY DISAPPOINT** our children.

In other words, we do need to **stand our ground** and use **Teaching Discipline** to curb our children's behavior.

But as we do that **LOVINGLY**, with **empathy and understanding**, it helps their hearts learn to **VALUE authority**, not just to comply with it.

In fact, we will talk about how the most powerful way to truly engage our children's brokenness or sinfulness, is to engage their hearts with strong **limits** AND **loving empathy** - at the same time. We **LOVINGLY DISAPPOINT**.

For some beautiful reason I don't know, God made it to where when our immaturity encounters love and limits, we grow and heal.

How do I help my kids learn to be strong?

We want our children to be able to **SUBMIT**

But

How are the adults **who are just compliant and obedient** doing in life?

Part of equipping our children for reality in this universe involves helping them find their own **strength** and **ability to handle things**.

Around **age 7 to 9**, children begin coming up with problems that you will find hard to solve **for them**.

The bully at school

Fear of going to sleep or of bad weather

Forgetting everything

This is a sign that it is time to stop '**parenting**', and start "**de-parenting**" i.e. helping them **find their own ability** to solve problems.

Deparenting means:

--we **discern** the problems that **only they can handle** and say,

"That is pretty scary, but you know what? I know you can handle it."

--And **manage** our own anxiety

--And **push** them to deal with it.

Children get their view of themselves and the world through the eyes of their parents.

Sometimes our eyes need to say, "You can do this!"

How do I help my kids learn to deal with pain in life?

We all have to make sense of how things on this planet are often NOT GOOD.

We see this **in three places**

Others – people in our lives are not perfect and let us down.

The World – things in our world are seldom perfect -

Ourselves – how do I make sense of my own imperfection?

A child's natural tendency when they confront these 'yucky' things is to:

Protest

Demand

Feel guilt/shame

Perfectionism

Anger

How do we help our children '**make peace**' with imperfection?

A few ideas

1. Be careful about opportunities you have to rescue your children from disappointment.

Our goal is not to **protect** them from suffering but to help them **suffer well**.

2. **Empathy and caring** in the midst of disappointment.

Loving empathy and understanding are the "anesthesia" that softens the blow of pain.

3. (The bad news) The most powerful way our children learn to deal with loss and imperfection is how they **SEE US** manage it in our own lives.

How do I help my kids know and love God?

Introduction to the ULTIMATE reality!

How do we teach them about God

1. **Content**
2. **Experience**

Content -

Overt teaching is necessary and great, but passages like Deuteronomy 6 teach us the ultimate place to teach our kids about God is "when you rise up, when you lay down, when you walk along the way."

Teach God's way as you live life!!

Experience -

The reason we can struggle with what we "know" about God, versus what we "feel" about God, is that somewhere we've experienced an **incongruity** between what we were **taught** about God and how we were **related to**.

The most powerful Godly influence that we can have on our children is showing them what it **feels like** to relate to God by **living with them** with love, limits, mercy, humility, power, forgiveness.

Let your walk match your talk.

But let's **stay free!** We can also **Let your talk match your walk.**

In other words, we can also teach them about God by showing them what it's like to **NEED** him and his grace.

We swing in and repair when we fail to live in a loving way with them.

I'm glad to be with you guys.

Stay free!!