

# WHAT'S "NOT FAIR?"

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I wonder how many times in a day parents and schoolteachers hear the phrase, "It's not fair?" The word 'fair' means to be free from injustice. There are localized injustices that tend to be of a personal nature while the mass extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust, or the shocking treatment of Ugandans or Iraqis due to despot leadership has created worldwide abhorrence of the blatant disregard for human life. In this article I am referring to localized injustice, to the times when kids cry, "It's not fair!"

Many times kids object because they think someone else has a bigger or better thing than they do. They may feel they are not being treated the same as others, that others are getting more attention than them, or that they don't get to make any choices. Sometimes they don't think it is fair that they are being grounded.

That annoying phrase, 'It's not fair' can be greatly reduced by following these suggestions. When family values are set in place and include clear expectations and consequences, then each family member is required to abide by them. This levels the playing field, because all family members understand what is expected of them.

Family meetings need to discuss the types of discipline that may be used when values are violated. The required corrective behavior will be the same, but we all know that styles of discipline work differently from one person to another – e.g. removing a privilege will work for one, when time out will work better on another.

When family members understand the desired behavior will always be the same, but that the 'mode of transport' to get there may differ, they will less likely feel they are being treated unfairly. Family values also discourage subjective discipline – made up on the spot. The violator of the value is making a choice to suffer a consequence rather than meet the expectation. On the up side, when values are being upheld, family members should be praised.

Kids need to be trained how to share, and how to wait for what they want. Kids need to learn that they just can't have everything they ask for. Parents need to take care not to favor one child over another. My uncle was a shocker with favoritism! He made no bones about having a favorite son and favorite grandson. It was sad to watch and this created frustration and envy.

I used to think that that the prodigal son's brother shouting, "It's not fair", was justified when the father made such a fuss over the lost son's return. Then it was explained to me that the older son had missed the point. He had always had the love and blessing of his father, where the younger son stepped out of that blessing, suffered the consequences, and in doing so, came to understand himself. He begged his father's forgiveness and was reinstated.

We need to operate and demonstrate a level of maturity where we consider the greatest fairness for all and not just to ourselves. This is a great principle to pass on to our kids. If you are constantly hearing the words, "It's not fair", then it is time to look at the root causes and deal with them.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.