

ARE YOU LOSING IT?

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Losing what, you may ask – my hair, my mind, the plot? My question is, “Are you losing control of yourself and/or your family? Specifically, are you losing your temper with your children? Do you let yourself get so angry and frustrated with them that you find yourself ranting, raving, yelling, or threatening them with unrealistic or impossible punishments?” To be honest with you, I have been guilty of much of the above. That was before I learned a much simpler, positive and therefore more effective way of managing my own responses to negative situations.

It would be safe to say that nobody likes being yelled at. It is disrespectful. Nobody likes being verbally or physically attacked because they crossed some invisible boundary they were unaware of. That is unfair. Nobody likes inconsistent expectations. That creates a feeling of distrust, insecurity and unreliability. Nobody likes living or working in a constantly tense, stressed, negative atmosphere. It is bad for one’s emotional and physical health. So, why do we find ourselves losing it with our children? There are two possible reasons. Firstly, we may be role modeling on our parents’ poor family management where screaming and yelling parents incited screaming, yelling kids. This became the norm. Was it an effective way of managing the family? I suggest not. Secondly, could it be that parents are not in agreement about how to manage the family, where one undermines the authority of the other? No matter what the ineffectual child management has been in the past, it can be remedied.

It is vital to have a plan, a plan both parents agree on and will adhere to. This removes the likelihood of kids pushing parents’ buttons, resulting in tempers flaring and out of control voices. There is a SIMPLE SOLUTION. As mentioned above, we all like to know the boundaries and expectations. We crave for consistency, and long to be respected and treated fairly. We want realistic corrective action, but we also want praise and encouragement. To achieve this, all that is needed is a sound plan and lots of training. Decide together, in priority order, what your family values will be. Explain what these values will look like in your home e.g. we respect one another. That means we do not raise our voices at each other. By establishing and enforcing this value we are creating clear expectations. You will need to role model this and train your children to reach your expectations. Praise them when they get it right and decide what the consequences will be for non-conformance. Monitor their frustration levels as well as your own. By doing so, you can head off bursts of anger. Teach your children how to manage conflicts peacefully. Create times for your kids to express their frustrations in a calm and safe manner.

It is all a simple matter of being proactive. Know your own reactions and know your children's behavioral tendencies. You can control frustration and anger. You don't have to lose your temper. By being a positive role model you are greatly increasing the likelihood that your children will provide peaceful, happy, well-managed families of their own.

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