

SURVIVING THE STORMS

The strong willed child

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The strong-willed child is born, not created. Believe it or not, they are a blessing to any family. As long as their strong will is channeled positively, they become great leaders and an asset to any society.

How do you know you have a strong-willed child? They are determined – they challenge everything. They want to know ‘why they should’, and ‘why they shouldn’t’ and ‘said who?’ When they are not in control of a situation, they will do that it takes to get it – e.g. throw a tantrum. These are special children who need a specific approach so they traverse childhood unscathed. Parents need to ensure ‘the will is broken, but not the spirit’. (Dr. James Dobson – The Strong Willed Child).

Under no circumstances excuse your child’s negative behavior – ‘she will grow out of it’, ‘boys will be boys’, ‘she’s too young to discipline yet’, ‘I used to be the same – it’s in the genes’. It is imperative that you are the one in control by the time the child is 2 years old, otherwise their negative pattern of behavior becomes embedded as they constantly fight to control situations. If not taught otherwise, they can become bullies, they lose friends, and as they grow older, have extreme difficulty in obeying any authority.

How do we manage a strong-willed child? Here are some guidelines: Make sure the child knows the expected behaviors. Keep them busy. Encourage absorbing interests such as sport, arts, crafts etc. to direct their energies. Talk them through unacceptable behaviors e.g. bullying or throwing tantrums and teach them why they should share, how to work together with others, and to take turns at being leader. Teach them why they must obey authority and ensure they know the consequences and that these consequences are applied. Give the strong-willed child responsibilities so they develop leadership skills. Acknowledge positive behavior. Ignore some negative behaviors for the sake of not constantly reprimanding the child. Choose your battles and work on negative behaviors one at a time.

Be tenacious – don’t give up. We have a strong-willed child and believe me, it was hard going, but she thanked us in the end. She is still strong-willed, even at 30 years old, but she has achieved great things, is multi-talented, is a great role model, leader and friend. It was worth every minute and we are very proud of her.

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.