

SQUEALERS AND SCREAMERS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Several weeks ago my little handcraft hobby took me to Alabama. My husband and I walked into the office to collect our envelope of instructions for the show. As we waited, there was a commotion in the other room. Suddenly the loudest, most blood-curdling scream we have ever heard assaulted our ears. I swear, I thought it was going to break my eardrums. Initially we got a real fright because it was so sudden and so loud.

Soon we realized, on looking at the bright red face of the 4 year old the noise was coming from, that he was objecting to being teased by an older brother. I just couldn't believe the whole scene. It seemed that the mother of the child was reacting in slow motion. The 4 year-old ran to his mother to tell on the brother and all she did was pat him on the head to console him, while telling the older boy to go to another room.

Why on earth would, or should, anyone put up with such an incredibly loud display of bad temper? Why did the child scream? Could he help it? Children will only scream and squeal if their parents allow them to – no 'buts'. There is absolutely no excuse for squealing...ever, and a scream should only be used when someone is in danger and need help – NOW!

A baby will cry when it is uncomfortable or hungry, and it will stop when the discomfort is relieved. When nobody comes to its rescue, it cries louder and louder. If ignored, the early seeds of distrust and anxiety are sown. If loud crying is the only way to get attention, a path is often set for the rest of the child's life. It can turn, in subsequent years, to the unacceptable squealing or screaming I have just alluded to simply to get a parent's attention. Here are some preventative tips.

Watch your children at play and notice when they become frustrated. Don't let older siblings continuously tease younger ones. Show them how to play together and how to share. The minute voices are raised in anger, stop the play and deal with it. Get down to the child's level, hold their hands, make them look at you and say in a quiet but stern voice, "Do not shout. If you want to have the toy, ask for it and wait till it is given to you. If you shout again you will not be able to play with the others." Be true to your word and be consistent. If you concentrate on eliminating shouting, you will more than likely not have problems with screamers later. Make sure you role model what you are expecting your kids to do.

If your child has already developed the screaming/squealing habit, have a family meeting. Tell all family members that squealing and screaming must stop from this moment on. Explain that screaming is reserved for times of extreme

danger and that nobody will come to help them in a real situation if they hear screaming all the time.

You know about the story of 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'! Create a strong consequence and consistently apply it if screaming continues. Screaming when there is no danger is a serious insult to others' ears, and should not be tolerated ever!

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.