

We teach others how to treat us

by Lisa McKimm



The first time that I ever heard that said, it hit me like a bullet. It has continued to be a very powerful reminder in my life whenever I don't particularly enjoy the treatment that I am receiving from someone. Think about it for a minute. The boss who is sarcastic and critical has staff who react with little loyalty and a resistance to 'going the extra mile'.

The person who turns a blind eye to their partner's philandering will not be likely to transform their mate into a faithful spouse. The teacher who is impatient with students will not get a warm response from them. And likewise, parents who are not fair or firm with their kids will find that their children have a very direct response to this. I remember a Mum in one of my groups who had an extremely 'strong willed' daughter that she was struggling with. This young lady was actually turning into quite a tyrant. Between the second and third session of her course - the Mum had a revelation!

She had announced that it was just about bath-time, but her seven year old daughter was not keen on the idea. "Later" she said to Mum. Mum worked hard to be respectful of her daughters opinions and said "Darling, you have a choice. You can have a bath later, but you need to realise that you will have used up our time for a game of cards before bedtime". Her daughter said that Yes - that was fine. She duly hopped into her bath 45 minutes later than usual.

After she was dried, she resolutely pronounced that she was ready for her card game now! Mum felt surprised and calmly reminded her of the choice that she had made. Her daughter fumed "I want to play cards NOW!" Mum gently refused, but her daughter continued to harass her. The volume was growing louder, and her daughter started an all-out paddy to try and get her own way. Mum had decided to be firm and stick to her guns with her new strategy. The foot-stamping and the flailing arms were full flight by now. Then suddenly she turned to her Mum and shouted "BUT YOU ALWAYS GIVE IN!!!"

Well, Mum could have been knocked over with a feather! She suddenly realised that she had trained her daughter to act in this power-crazy, demanding way - because she had always allowed it to work. She had actually taught her daughter how to treat her this way!

Next time that you dislike the way your kids are treating you - think hard. What kind of messages have I been sending to make them think that this is OK? You may find some enlightening answers, just like this Mum did!

© Lisa McKimm, 2000

More articles for parents online at: <http://www.parentingworx.co.nz/fantastic-reading/>