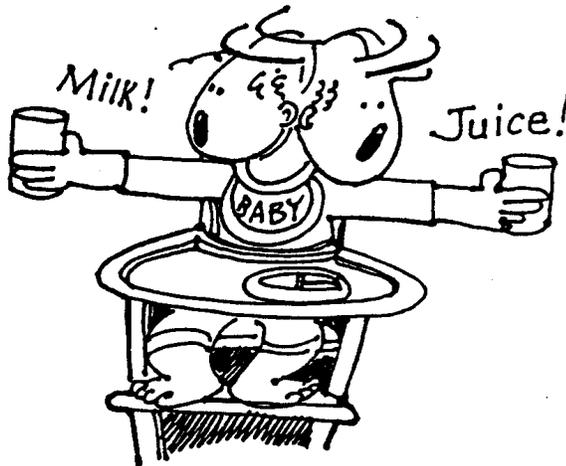


Sidestepping the Power Struggle

Practice Book

Course 1: Chapter 2

Tell Me It's a Stage



LIFE Seminars
Dr. Alison Miller & Dr. Allison Rees

Chapter 2 - "I Gotta Be Me"

Parent Handouts

Development of the Child's Self

Developing independence
Learning to handle feelings
Becoming aware of others as persons

Problematic Transition Stages

- baby to preschooler (1-2 years)
- preschooler to school age child (4–5 years)
- child to teenager (12-14 years)

Feelings : What Your Child Must Learn

- to identify feelings correctly
- to express feelings appropriately
- to control behaviour when having strong feelings
- to identify sources of the feelings
- to take appropriate action to meet needs



¹Handouts for Development of the Child's Self

Symptoms of the Struggle for Independence

- negativism
- changing his or her mind
- refusing help
- stubbornness
- defiance
- criticizing parents
- shutting out family members
- doing things to irritate you
- arguing

Symptoms of the Fear of Independence

- needing parents at night
- crying when parents leave
- "You do it for me," "I can't"
- self-criticism
- touchiness
- babyish behaviour



Children's Problems With Feelings

- negativism
- identifying feelings incorrectly
- hurting others physically
- wanting something right now
- temper tantrums
- moodiness, moping and sulking
- touchiness

Egocentric Behaviours

- demanding undue attention
- refusing to share
- cruelty to animals
- cruelty to people
- provoking and bugging
- fighting and arguing
- group cruelty to those who are different



Symptoms of the Struggle for Independence

2.1 Children can be negative about anything their parents want them to do.



When children are struggling for independence small things can become power struggles. They may change their minds constantly. Do you recognize any of this?

Susan, please put on your dress now!
Emma and Sahra will be here soon



But Susan, we've already discussed this. We're going to lunch at a nice restaurant!..

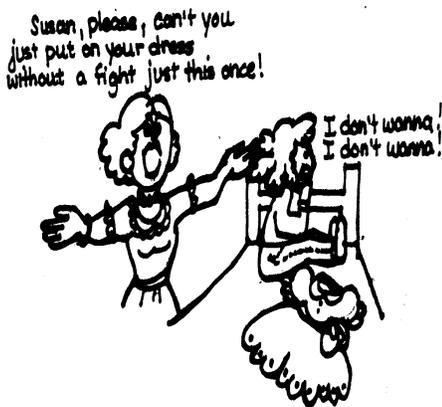


2.1 (continued)



Stubbornness, defiance and talking back are signs of developing independence. How does your child try to assert himself?

Why does this important part of growing up create so many problems?



Do you remember struggling for independence when you were growing up?

How could the mother in this cartoon respect her daughter's need to make her own decisions?

Here they are. Now you have two minutes or you stay home!





How would the mother benefit from empowering her child?



2.2 - Children criticize parents, argue, and do things to irritate us.

While our young children might embarrass us when they are messy and loud they grow up into young teens who are embarrassed by our appearance and behaviour. Do you remember feeling like this when you were a young teen?



When kids go through stages of pushing limits and trying to become independent they find lots of things to argue about and they do things to irritate you. What limits is your child pushing, and what arguments does he or she create?



They will do things just to irritate you and defy you.



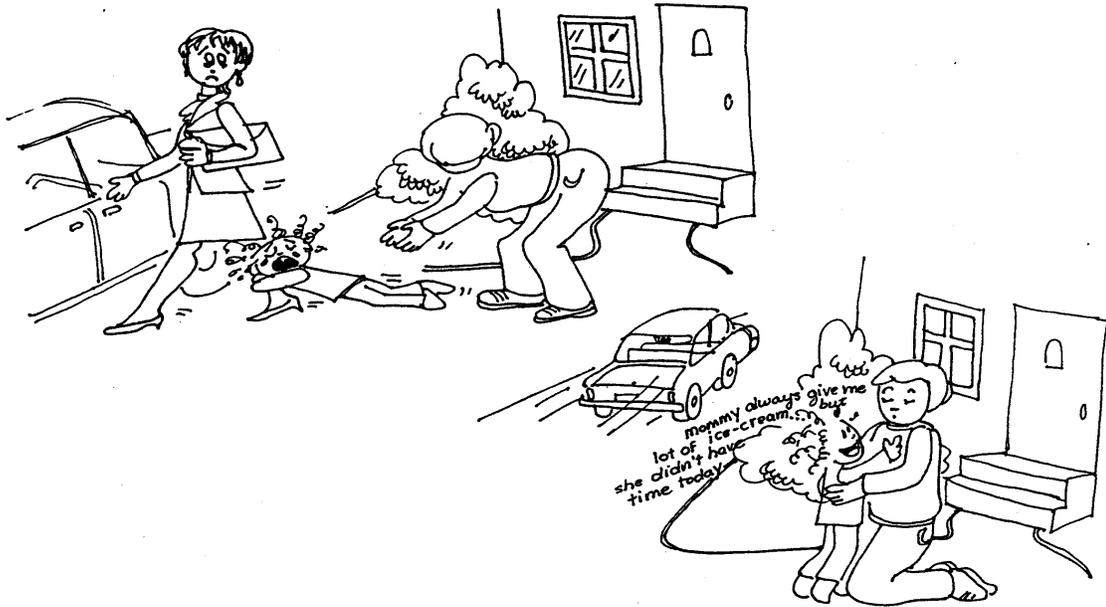
Symptoms of the Fear of Independence

2.3 - Children Cry, Cling, and Climb into Bed with Parents

Young children cry when their parents leave, cling to them, and climb into their bed at night. Have you gone through this with your child?



They may scream and cry when you leave and be fine after you're gone.



2.4 Children Sometimes Act Babyish

You may notice children who can do things for themselves wanting you to feed them, dress them, give them a bottle, and so on, especially when a younger child or new baby is around. They say they can't do things that you've seen them do before. Growing up is hard!

Have you experienced this?

Teens are a little more subtle in their fear of growing up. They will criticize themselves, feel misunderstood, put off doing things they don't have confidence about, ask them to drive you places, or ask you to help with homework when they can do it themselves. Have you seen this in your children or other teens you know?



2.5 - Children Go Through Transition Stages

Problematic Transition Stages

- baby to preschooler (1-2 years)
- preschooler to school age child (4–5 years)
- child to teenager (12-14 years)
- teenager to adult (17-19 years)

Children have more trouble with the struggle for independence (and the fear of it) during the transition stages, when they move from one stage of life to another. Problem behaviours appear during transitions, and naturally go away when the transition is over.

What transition stages have you noticed with your child or children?

On the right are some suggestions for handling transition stages. Which of these have you tried?

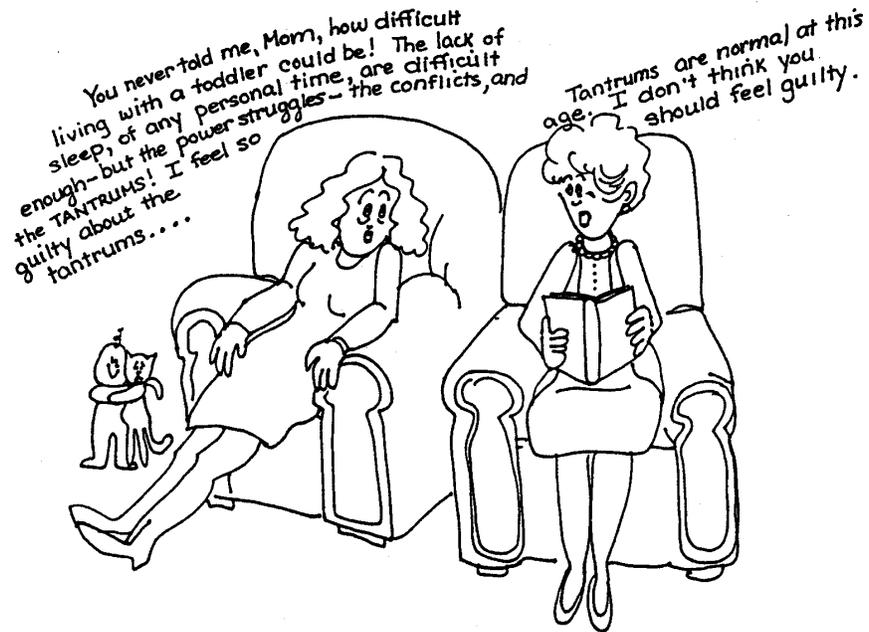
What else have you tried?

Suggestions for Handling Transition Stages

- Minimize your rules
- Be consistent
- Ignore verbal “flak”
- Be positive
- Spend 1:1 time with your child
- Roll with the punches



2.6 - Children Need to Learn About Feelings



Even adults need to learn about how to handle their feelings!

Do you notice a change in your child’s behaviour when she or he is hungry and tired?

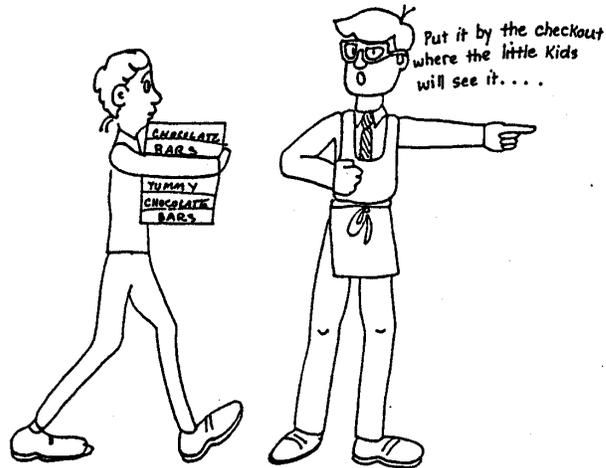
Many young children have those feelings but are unable to identify them. As they get older they need to learn to identify more complex emotions. How can you help your child identify his or her feelings?



2.7 - Children's Frustrated Needs Lead to Strong Feelings and Behaviour

Stores rely on children's inability to deal with strong feelings brought on by frustrated needs, which take over children. How does your child react to frustration?

What approach seems to help your child?



How can you deal with your own feelings of frustration during these challenging times?

Feelings are messages to tell you what your needs are. What kind of messages do you receive frequently as a parent?



2.8 Children Can't Control Their Behaviour When They're Upset

ONE DAY IN THE DRUGSTORE:



SAME PLACE, NEXT DAY:



Many people forget how difficult it is for children to deal with their strong emotions. Is this true of you?

Rather than recognizing simple childish immaturity, people are often quick to blame the parents. Has this happened to you?



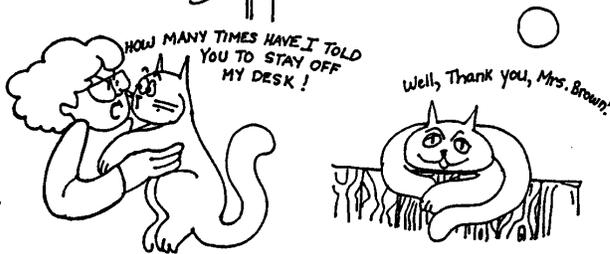
2.9 - Emotions Get Dumped Out on Other People

We often direct our anger onto someone else instead of dealing with our own underlying feelings. Children can be great with other adults and save a lot of their negative behaviour for mom or dad. Has this happened to you?





Do you ever direct anger at your children that belongs somewhere else?



Moodiness, moping, sulking and temper tantrums are typical ways for children to express their feelings. Do your children do this?

How do you handle it?



2.10 - Parents Can Learn to Help Children with their Feelings

What are the dangers of ignoring, dismissing or shaming a child's feelings?

How can you help your child explore his or her feelings in a healthy way?

How can parents accept their children's feelings while dealing with strong behaviour?



2.11 Healthy Children Are Egocentric (Self-Centered)

The child in the cartoon below thinks she is helping mom by yelling out that mom has a headache – the natural egocentricity of being young stops her from realizing that her own behaviour may be making the headache worse. She is aware that mom is hurting, and wants to help. Egocentricity is not selfishness.



Handling relationships with other people demands a number of complex skills, all of which have to be learned. Young children naturally believe that they are the center of the universe. It takes all of childhood plus some adult years to realize that other people exist as selves. Children can't easily see things from other people's point of view. This self-centeredness is not selfishness, and children grow out of it.

What have you noticed about your child's inability to see others' point of view?



2.12 Egocentric Children Don't Consider Others' Feelings and Needs

Egocentric Children:

- demand undue attention
- refuse to share
- can be cruel to animals
- can be cruel to people
- like to provoke and bug
- fight and argue
- gang up on others

Of all of the undesirable behaviours your child produces, how many are due to egocentricity?

Can you accept that it takes all of childhood and then some to see others as “a self like myself”?



2.13 - Children Put Themselves First

It is normal for young children not to share, to need you when you are on the phone and to hug the cat without realizing how the cat may feel. Their feelings get hurt when we ask them to put their wants aside for the sake of others!

Can you think of some examples of your child putting himself or herself first?



Can you think of ways to teach your child that other people or animals may feel the same way that he or she does?



2.14 - Children Experiment with Their Effect on Others



Calling other children names or pinching the baby is partly a result of strong feelings and partly egocentric attempts to get a reaction. We may not like this but it is normal! How can you teach your child that other people have feelings too?

Children can be cruel to anyone who seems different in any way. Unfortunately group cruelty is also a normal part of childhood. Can you remember experiencing group cruelty as either part of the group or the one being singled out?

