



Parenting - Your Loss When You Argue With Your Child!

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This past month I have spent two weeks with my children and six grandchildren.

For one of those weeks I was the sole caregiver for my 15 year old and 10 year old grandsons whose parents had travelled to Maui. Even though they had been "warned" that I meant what I said, there were several times that I was asked "Are you serious?"

At first they didn't believe it when I said that anyone who was in the vehicle by 8 a.m. could have a ride to school and those who didn't make it could walk. "Are you serious?" they said with wide eyes. They were used to their mother's encouragement and patience as they doddled each morning. They knew that I was serious when at 7:55 a.m. I called "Goodbye" and headed for the car. They came running with shoes and books in hand.

The ten year old told his mother (and the town librarian) that the only part he didn't enjoy about my visit was when he ran for two blocks chasing my car after ignoring my call to leave the snow hill at Staples when it was time to go home. He must have known that I was serious because he never ignored my requests again!

I don't argue with children. They know that I have no problem checking with a teacher to find out exactly what homework was assigned or in developing strategies with the drum teacher to motivate a child who doesn't want to practice. The dog eats before the children and bedtime is a non-negotiable.

I don't have any guilt in telling boys that they can have a friend over but that I won't serve hot chocolate or dinner for anyone until "after" the driveway is shoveled.

Everyone helps cook and clean toilets and carry groceries and de-ice the windshield. Oh, and they know that they might as well bring home all the toques and scarves from the school locker because those who do not have them on don't get the free rides at 8 a.m. "Are you serious?" Yes.

And if (when) they "blow it" with the boundaries about using the computer - no problem. I just hide the computer and don't give it back. Are you serious? Uh-huh.

Yes, and I talk to adolescent friends - even if it is embarrassing for my charge. I need to know who is influencing them and just make sure that I have something that isn't too dorky to say to them so the embarrassment is not because of what I said but just because I am an "older" relative.

The grandsons and I talk about sex and politics and money. "Are you serious?" Well who else is going to put the focus on good values and staying healthy and wise?

You see, when my daughter put me in charge I took it seriously. I knew that this would probably be one of the few opportunities in life that I would have to teach responsible behaviours and, at the same time shower tons of love on those boys.

And when the homework was done we watched movies, went to the library, ate hamburgers at the arena, played games and laughed. We bonded into a strong and interdependent unit.

We created and published on our daily blog (complete with pictures) which their parents could read all the way from the Hawaiian Islands. It updated them on our activities and reminded them of their responsibilities - like signing a consent for the upcoming school party, reimbursing the costs of the calculator that was needed while they were away, and returning important phone messages.

When the parents returned and saw that there was only one pair of shoes for each child at the door (with heels against the wall), clean bedding in place, and happy children, my son-in-law said "She's the best nanny ever!"

There was only one response that I could give.

"Are you serious?"

You see, it was easy once everyone accepted the fact that I don't argue and I mean what I say.