

Parental Leadership and the Strong-Willed Child

By

Dr. Lilian Wong,

Associate Professor of Psychology,

Tyndale University College

Contact: lwong@tyndale.ca

#416-226-6620 ext. 2174

Introduction

- Parenting is a most complex and difficult task, and one for which most people are ill-prepared
- Today's rapidly changing world poses great challenges to parents
- Additional challenges arise when one has a *strong-willed child*

Portrait of strong-willed children

- constantly push the envelope and test the limits
- don't back down easily in the confrontation of wills
- want to be the boss and enjoy exerting their power
- do not obey unconditionally; they want to know why
- won't comply with a rule until it makes sense to them
- want to do their own things and be in charge or control of what they do
- have a rebellious trait
- instinctive response to even the simplest request is NO

What is good about the strong-willed child?

- a strong-will can be an asset rather than a negative personality trait
- determination, courage, and an indomitable spirit can enable them to make a difference in the world

Dr. Dobson writes in his book
The Strong Willed Child:

"It is my firm conviction that the strong-willed child usually possesses more creative potential and strength of character than his compliant siblings, provided his parents can help him channel his impulses and gain control of his rampaging will."

Dare to lead a strong-willed child

- How to break in a strong-willed thorough-bred?
Whipping or “horse whisper”?
- How to train a strong-willed child?
Spanking or “child whisper”?

Parents as leaders

- Parents need to assert and develop their divinely appointed leadership over their children
- Without leadership, all the skills regarding discipline will not work effectively
- Research has clearly demonstrated that loving and authoritative parenting is most effective and beneficial.
- Effective leadership requires flexibility. A strong-willed child cannot be treated the same way as a compliant child.

How to lead a strong-willed child

- Leading a strong-willed child requires a firmer hand and a greater show of love and patience
- Act more and speak less
- Speak in a authoritative and calm tone
- Communicate clearly the boundaries and consequences
- Set few rules but enforce them consistently and firmly
- Do whatever it takes to establish your leadership without getting into a power struggle

How to lead a strong-willed child (cont.)

- Make sure the child knows who is the boss
- If your child has been running your life, it is never too late to re-establish your authority by beginning to make simple and easy to follow demands
- Set up a consistent and predictable environment (a chaotic and ambiguous environment encourages misbehavior).
- Recognize and appreciate your child's uniqueness
- Let your child know that you are on his team and that you will always be there for him
- Reassure your child of your unconditional love and your constant prayer for him

Basic rules for the crucial early years

- Teach your child that love is a two-way street
- Cultivate in your child an attitude of love and respect towards parents and other adults
- Establish clear boundaries for their safety
- Establish habits of listening.
- Establish habits of love.
- Teach your child self-control and responsibility in all activities – from play to doing home work

What are the Tasks of Parental Leaders?

- Leadership involves many roles
 - Planning
 - Decision-making
 - Setting limits
 - Standards
 - Providing a vision for the family
 - Motivating family members to achieve their best
 - Team-building

What is your mission statement as a parent?

- Produce high-achievers
- Promote children's self-esteem
- Develop their potential
- Teach them right from wrong
- Help them believe in Jesus
- Provide a loving environment
- Raise happy, healthy, and responsible kids

More Tasks of Parental Leaders

- Develop a holistic, proactive approach
- Develop a ‘war plan’ to protect and develop your children
- Become a mentor, teacher, role-model, counsellor and friend rolled into one

How you can Develop your Parental Leadership

- You must be willing to lead
- Reclaim your parental authority
- Exercise parental authority on a daily basis
- Develop your leadership potential – learn your weakness, strengths and acquire new skills
- Think as a leader

- Develop the mind of a leader
- Act as a leader
- Do the task of a leader
- Embrace servant-leadership as a lifestyle

“The quest for leadership is first an inner quest to discover who you are. Through self development comes the confidence to lead”

(Kouzes and Posner)