
Changing the Parenting Path: A Deep Dive Into Ineffective Behaviors - ROUND 2

A Summary of Ineffective Behaviors

Behaviors are ways we act in our environment, particularly in relation to others. We behave differently in different situations - including our ways of behaving as parents. Sometimes behaviors are helpful, sometimes they're not.

Ineffective behaviors are behaviors that have a negative impact.

We all engage in behaviors that are ineffective. By increasing our awareness of these behaviors, we can work towards accepting that how we are behaving is not working. This is the first step in making changes to our behavior that will ultimately improve our relationships.

Ineffective Parenting Behaviors

We took a look at this last week - as a refresher:

- “Helicoptering”
- Being a friend vs. a parent
- Lack of acceptance of sexuality, gender identity, career path

This week we will look further into the following:

- **Reactivity (yelling, threatening, etc.)**
- **Over vocalizing disappointments**
- **Passive aggression**

If an item on this list struck a nerve - then it is probably something worth looking into.

Areas that impact all of these behaviors are:
Not controlling our own emotions/anxieties and not taking care of own needs

Reactivity

What is it?

Reactivity is when we act on our emotion in the moment before taking the time to process the underlying issue. More often than not, reactivity increases stress and frustration for everyone involved.

Why do we do it?

- It allows us to alleviate the feeling we're having and put it on someone else
- We get to avoid being vulnerable (are we sensing a theme here?)
- It is really hard NOT to react due to how much we care as parents (reactivity often stems from underlying fears for our children)

Why is it problematic?

When we react, we are acting out of secondary emotions (anger, frustration) rather than the underlying emotion (fear, shame). When we act out of anger, this puts the other person in a defensive position, which causes them to react as well, escalating the secondary emotions and beginning a vicious cycle

Over-Vocalizing Disappointments

What is it? Oversimplifying - this occurs when we are disappointed about a choice our adult child makes and we can't stop talking about it. And/or when discussion generally surrounds the choices, behaviors, ideas, etc. of our adult child (past and/or present).

Why do we do it?

- We want to be heard and understood
- It is difficult to watch our children make “bad” choices
- We want to motivate our young adult to make a different choice

Why is it problematic?

When we focus all of our attention on what disappoints us, we focus little to no attention on the positive choices and changes our children make. We tend to remember and focus on the negative - so it's the same with your adult child. When we **overemphasize** disappointment it becomes more difficult to be heard when we are providing praise or approval, something (for better or worse) that even the most secure of adults need from their parents.

Passive Aggression/Indirect

What is it? Passive Aggression is “a deliberate and masked way of expressing covert feelings of anger.” It involves behaviors designed to “get back” at another person without the other recognizing the underlying anger.

Examples: backhanded compliments, threat based questions, wistful statements, keeping score, “I’m fine” lying

Why do we do it?

- Learned that anger is not acceptable in some families/our society.
- Fear of conflict or rejection
- Covert power plays, passive “aggressor” person take back power rather than having to be vulnerable.
- Difficulty processing emotions

Why is it problematic?

in the long run, passive aggressive behavior is even more destructive to interpersonal relationships than aggression. Over time, virtually all relationships with a person who is passive aggressive become confusing, destructive, and dysfunctional.

Changing Our Approach

All ineffective parenting behaviors begin with **good intentions**.

The issue is that these natural reactions don't solve the root of the issue - they only exacerbate it. In order to change course, we need to step back and allow for the discomfort that is part of the process of allowing our children to mature.

Oftentimes...

- **Reactivity** stems from desire to express and connect >> Emotional Regulation Skills
- **Over-vocalizing disappointments** comes from the desire to show support and love, wanting what's best for your child >> say once, stick to natural or discussed consequence
- **Passive Aggression** is a means of protecting another person from the pain of our directness, as well as our own discomfort with expressing our true feelings >> DEARMAN skill

Questions to Consider

- What ineffective behavior is my biggest struggle?
- Where did I learn these behaviors?
- What makes this behavior problematic in my relationship with my child?
- What is my *intention* behind my parenting behaviors?
- What am I doing behaviorally that is effective?