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KIDS (Rules & Consequences)
Wayne L. Misner

Excerpt from the book Men Don't Listen

The combinations of the mixed family unit come in many varieties: her kid(s), his kid(s), and their kid(s) together. The ages of the kids and the stages they are going through also create different problems at different times during the relationships. Disciplinary methods create a very large problem. Both partners will have their own style of discipline and the consequences to be paid when your rules are not followed. Even the consequences you come up with might change depending upon your mood or based on how you felt that day or at that particular moment.

When my children were growing up, the local hospital ran a seminar over a ten-week period (one night a week) on parenting children. I will share some of the recommendations given. I did apply them, and in most cases, they did help and many did work. The first one (and I believe if you are the biological parents or stepparents this should be done) is to sit down together without the kids, and write out the rules of the house. This works for a single parent also. Both of you must agree what constitutes the rules and what the consequence will be if the rules, are broken.

The rules and consequences are different for each age. An example might be if your son is thirteen that on school nights the rule is that he must be home by 10:00 p.m. The consequence if he were late (by fifteen minutes) would be grounding the next night. When both of you agree what the rules and the consequences are, they should be typed. A meeting with each child to go over, in detail, every rule and consequence should be held. The child must understand each one thoroughly and then sign at the

bottom of the list making a contract between all of you. This signing makes the contract appear more bonding.

I cannot stress how important it is that both of you present a united front to the children on the rules. If you do not, the child will play both of you against each other. The child might do this subconsciously, the divide and conquer concept. Without the rules and the bonded contract, the child would challenge the stepparent with, "You're not my father" or "You're not my mother." The kids resent the outsider coming into their space and feel now, more acutely, the loss of their parent. The kids will fight the rules if they believe the non-parent set the rule. You both must be united in this effort. Behind closed doors you can disagree and discuss, but in front of the kids give the appearance that the two of you set the rules. The kids must believe the outsider is just supporting the biological parent in enforcing the rules.

Another area, which will help eliminate potential problems, is the handling of an allowance. The allowance should be in two pieces, a flat amount and an incentive scale allowance. The flat amount is given the same time and day every week with no strings attached. (The allowance should be paid without the child asking for it.) They do not have to do housework or homework to earn this portion. This allowance is given to teach the child the meaning of money. If they spend the allowance the first day, then they learn to wait for next week to have money again. If they want something which costs more than the weekly allowance, they must save some money over time to buy the item wanted. The amount of the allowance should be based on the age of the child; the older the child, the larger the amount of allowance.

The second piece of the allowance is connected to chores. A figure is established for each chore, i.e., wash dishes, take garbage out, mow lawn, wash car(s) etc. Now when they want something, the incentive is not to take just the regular allowance but add to it the incentive allowance by doing extra chores during the week. You want to encourage the extra chores. This method is building the foundation for adulthood. When adults work harder and produce more, they normally get paid more.

This example does not have all the rules you might want. Add, delete, and change to fit your situation and the age of the child.

AN EXAMPLE OF SOME RULES MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS:
RULE CONDITION CONSEQUENCE

- Curfew on school night 10:00 PM (15 Min. late) Grounded next day
- Curfew non-school night 11:00 PM (15 Min. late) Grounded next day
- If sick, miss school Cannot go out at night
- No kids allowed in house when adult not home Grounded next day
- No arguing with yelling or cursing ... 1st warning No TV or Phone 1hr ... 2nd warning No TV or Phone 2hr ... 3rd warning No TV or Phone tonight

- No telephone call After 10:00 PM After one warning Grounded
- Supper time 15 Min Late Cold dinner
- Supper time 30 Min Late No TV or Phone 1hr
- Supper time 1 Hr. Late No TV or Phone 2 hr
- Supper time 2 Hr. Late Grounded next day
- No decisions when friend is listening answer..If friends are listening will always be "No"
- Friends over
- School night 10:00 PM No friends over for week
- Non-school night 11:00 PM No friends over for week

One caution when applying a consequence for a broken rule: do not "cut off your own nose to spite your face." If the thirteen year old boy stayed out on a school night past the ten o'clock curfew and the consequence is being grounded the next day, before grounding see what is happening the next day. If he had been scheduled to go to a religious retreat, you do not want to ground him that day. Any time something is happening to help build his character or enables him to mature, let him participate. But, explain that he is grounded the day after the event.