

Are you a threatening parent?

Have you ever used any of these phrases?

If I have to get up from this chair you are in trouble?

Don't make me have to come in there.

If I see your stuff laying on the floor one more time I will throw it away or out the window.

Don't make me have to hurt you!

Have you lost your mind? I can help you find it!

I brought you in this world and I can take you out!

Get out of my face or else

I can sadly but truthfully say, I have been guilty of saying a few of these and even some others not mentioned. Why do we go there as parents? Our children can really push our buttons and some even have a goal to rile us up. (see my article on reasons children misbehave).

Daily activities of life can cause stress in the calmest parent and simple things like getting up in the morning, getting dressed, bathing, cleaning up, eating/meal times, homework, bedtime and sibling rivalry can drive parents bonkers.

You never signed up for these issues when you thought of your life as a parent. However, we did know parenting is not easy. Keep reading for some helpful tips to use to give up threatening your children.

When children are born they are completely dependent on us. After they are out of the birth canal the struggle begins. They are programmed to seek support, security, and significance and as they age they work on finding their own way and becoming independent. (This is the goal, by the way). Many parents dream of the magical 18th birthday when they no longer must support their child, now adult. (This is also not true). Well what do you do before then, you ask? Take some deep breaths and let's begin.

First thing parents must do is recognize they are stressed and find out the source. If you are irritated and tired from working, now is not the time to have in depth conversations with anyone. Set a 10 – 15-minute window of alone time just to recoup from the day and destress. Talk to your children and have them help you by having their snacks or an activity ready to occupy them during your CALMING TIME.

Put a sign on your door that says from this time to this time no one is to come to the door or call me unless it is an emergency. Blood, fighting, and pain are emergencies. Who gets to watch TV or use the computer, or eat what food is not.

Watch your words. It is better to say nothing at all then to threaten your children. Let them know you are upset and will deal with whatever infraction they are involved in when you are calm. This teaches them self-control and anger management. Remember they watch and model what we do, and negative words can hurt for a lifetime.

Watch your proximity to your child when you are upset. If you are too upset and close to them and they rebel, is it easy lose control and to reach out and touch them in a harmful way. Don't push, pull, shove, yell in their face, hit, slap, grab their ear or mouth, etc. (I know I am talking to quite a few of you parents). Old School.

If you can get support from another trusted adult. This can be a challenge especially for single parents, however it is necessary for your sanity. Maybe take turns with another single parent to watch each other's children or even have play dates where you drop off the kids and have some quality alone time. This brings me to another important point. Make personal time for yourself to do something you enjoy every did I say EVERY month. Self-care is so important. The last thing you want is to get so worn out or frustrated that you become ill, unpleasant or unbearable to be around.

When you do say something negative, go back and immediately apologize to your child. Let them know it was a mistake and then validate them. They need to feel secure, significant and content in the family. We all can be pushed when stressed, but it is our job to use appropriate calming skills and communicate effectively with our children. Work on making this the exception and not the rule. Maybe you need anger management skills. If so seek a professional to assist you. There is no shame in getting assistance and taking control of your life and your actions. This also teaches your kids to ask for help when they need it.

Don't argue with your children. Let me repeat this. Don't argue with your children. You can have discussions with them even when you don't agree but don't get in power struggles with your child. Simply state your point and the consequence and end the conversation. You do not have to always have the last word, but you do need to make sure your children understand your perspective. One way to do this is to repeat the problem and clarify it and get your child's but in by having them repeat it back to you. If they refuse, simply state "I have given you the choice to either abide by the house rule or to have a consequence if you do not. If they are older, sometimes negotiating is an option but not for every situation. If it is a safety issue, then let them know this is a non-negotiable rule.

Example: Your 11- year old wants to stay up until 11pm and you say bedtime is 9:30pm. You say, "It is important that you have a full night of rest for school. You get up at 7am and have to get dressed, make lunch, get ready and be at the bus stop at 8AM. If you don't have enough rest, you won't be properly equipped to perform your best at school." They might say their friends get to stay up and they want to be up talking to them and it's not fair. They might even say they are not tired at 9:30. Your response, "I hear that you feel you want to stay up late like your friends, however you struggle to get ready and forget things when you don't have enough sleep. You are not also in the best mood when you are tired. One the weekends you can stay up until 11, Friday and Saturday, however, bedtime is 9:30 pm during the weekdays. If you don't follow the rules, then your consequence will be Maybe a 30 minute earlier wake up time for the next two days. If you complain then another 30 minutes will be added the next day. The consequence should be reasonable and deal with the issue. Grounding them for a month is too extreme and, doesn't show them how to problem solve and tie the consequence with their choice. Children need to learn their choices create consequences. A parent should not try to control their children, but guide them to become positive, problem solvers and accountable for their actions. When they are severely punished it becomes a power struggle or about your punishment and not about the child and their decision.

Children are not mature as an adult is, and they don't have the same reasoning and mental acuity(clarity) that adults do. They want immediate gratification and they want to do what they think their peers are doing or getting.

Ask your children to help. Age appropriate chores are a good thing. We all must work to sustain ourselves, and children need to learn this principle. Rules are a part of society. Share examples with them and when possible use current situations. (Age Appropriate). Older kids, teens especially, understand a lot and are exposed to almost everything on the internet so discuss situations they might have read about online or through social media.

Be positive and consistent. We all know the saying, if you don't have something nice to say, keep it to yourself. There is some wisdom in this. This doesn't mean not confronting wrong behaviors, but not to demean, belittle, minimize or disrespect others with our words and actions. (gestures, body language and emoticons do count). Don't give a consequence today and next week let them off the hook. Stick to your word or your children will learn you aren't consistent and they will use it against you. Don't say it if you don't mean it. Think before you speak. Threats are meant to control people, and we want our children to learn self-control. Don't say you will throw away their stuff if you don't mean it. You will only have to spend more money replacing it. If it is inappropriate don't buy it for them or allow them to purchase it. Discuss appropriate clothes and even if they have their own money to but it, let them know their clothes selection must pass a standard you set. Go over it in detail and have them show you they understand. Some kids will sneak clothes anyway. A consequence could be they are not allowed to buy something else they wanted for a set time. (don't be extreme but do make sure it has an impact). If all else fails seek professional assistance to give you options and a perspective different from yours.

Parenting without threatening can be accomplished with consistent practice. Threats show that you are out of control. Make sure you have some private time to calm down, don't argue with your child, check your own emotions and leave the room to process your feelings before you speak in anger. Apologize when you do make a mistake, no one is perfect. Encourage your children and provide consequences for poor choices. Seek support from others and enjoy your children. We all need to be able to laugh at life and ourselves. It is a process and a journey. Transformation doesn't occur over night. Be patient with your children and yourself and model appropriate behavior often. It is okay to tell your children you had a rough day and need 10 minutes of personal time to destress. This will make you a better parent. Teach children problem solving skills and hold them accountable for their actions. Don't compare yourself to others. Do what is best for your family but be open to suggestions from your children. Listen to their feelings and validate them while still maintaining being in charge of the house. You can do it. Parent without threatening. Go for it!