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Have a New Kid

by Friday

How to Change
Your Child's

- ✓ Attitude
- ✓ Behaviour &
- ✓ Character in **5 Days**

Dr. Kevin Leman

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Today's the day you launch your action plan. Sit back and watch the fun . . . and the confusion on your child's face. I guarantee you're going to hit payday if you never, never give up. (Old Winston Churchill was right.) The stakes are high, but you can do it. The power of your follow-through will reap benefits that will withstand the test of time.

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Introduction

They're Unionized . . . and Growing Stronger

Your kids have a game plan to drive you bonkers . . . but you don't have to let them call the shots.

I've got news for you. Since the beginning of time, kids have been unionized, and they've got a game plan to drive you bonkers. Don't believe it?

Take a look around. You tell me what you see in malls, stores, restaurants, and even your own living room.

What about the toddler who cries until she wears her mother down and gets to go not only *once* but *three times* on the carousel?

The teenager who yells, "Bleep you!" at his dad and stalks off?

The dad who allows his overweight 12-year-old to fill the grocery cart with Twinkies, Oreos, Coke, and Salerno Butter Cookies, then simply shrugs when the boy downs two packs of Twinkies as they stand in the checkout line?

The 7-year-old who gives his mom the “I dare you to do anything about it here” steely glare as he pushes the broccoli off his plate and watches it fall to the floor at the restaurant?

The 16-year-old who flips off her dad for not giving her money for a movie, then demands the car keys for the evening?

The 14-year-old dressed in all black who has “attitude” written all over her and gives every sign of going the wrong direction?

The 3-year-old who spends his day screaming, to make sure his parents appease his every whim?

It all goes to show that in today’s society, children even shorter than a yardstick are calling the shots. They’re part of the entitlement group—they expect anything and everything good to come their way, with no work on their part, just because they exist. In their eyes, the world *owes them*—and owes them big time. Some hedonistic little suckers of the ankle-biter battalion have even graduated to emeritus status and are holding down the hormone group division. Then there are the already-adult children who return home to your cozy little nest and stay and stay and stay. . . .

You know all about that too. If you picked up this book, you did so for a reason. Have you just about had it? Do you want to see some things—or a lot of things—change in your house? It isn’t always the big things that wear you down. It’s the constant battles with attitudes and behaviors like eye rolling, talking back, fighting with siblings, giving the “silent treatment,” and slamming doors. It’s the statements like, “You can’t make me do it!” and “I hate you!” flung into your face as your child retreats once again to his bedroom. It’s the exhaustion and stress of dealing with children who start swinging from the minute they get up.

Maybe your child’s behavior has embarrassed you (you could have done without your son’s all-out tantrum in the mall or your daughter’s belly button and nose rings, which she revealed for the first time when you had a business associate over for dinner), and you know it’s time to do something. Maybe you’ve been held

hostage from certain activities because of your children's actions ("Well, honey, I don't know if we should go out to dinner with the Olsons; you know how the kids get"). Or maybe you're seeing active signs of disrespect and rebellion, and you're worried about where your child is headed next.

I'll be blunt. You've got a big job to do and a short window in which to do it. I know, because I've raised 5 children—4 daughters and 1 son—with my wife, Sande. The years go far too quickly.

If you believe that you, as a parent, are to be in healthy authority over your child, this book is for you. If you don't believe that you, as a parent, are to be in healthy authority over your child, put this book down right now and buy another. You won't like what I have to say, you won't do it, and you'll complain about me to your friends.

But let me ask you something first: how do you feel after an hour of yelling at your kids to get up in the morning in time to catch the school bus? Could there be a better way?

What if you did something different? What if you *didn't* wake them up this morning? What if you did nothing at all?

"But, Dr. Leman," you're saying, "I can't do that. They'd be late for school. And I'd be late for work."

Now you're catching on.

How do you feel after listening to your children bicker constantly over who gets the bathroom first? Over who wore whose shirt and left it in a heap on the floor?

How do you feel after listening to your children bellyache over what you packed them for lunch?

It isn't always the big things that wear you down. It's the constant battles.

How do you feel after an hour of yelling at your kids to get up in the morning in time to catch the school bus?

What if you didn't intercede in the sibling battles? What if you didn't play peacemaker or rush to wash your daughter's favorite shirt in time for her to wear it to school? What if you didn't pack any lunch at all?

Ah, now you're getting it.

There *is* a better way, and you're holding it in your hand.

Did you know that your job as a parent is not to create a happy child? That if your child is temporarily unhappy, when he or she does choose to put a happy face back on, life will be better for all of you?

When your child yells, "You can't make me do it!" he's right. You can't *make* him do something. But if he chooses not to be helpful, you don't have to take him to the Secretary of State to get his driver's license either.

You see, nothing in life is a free ride. The sooner children learn that, the better. Every person is accountable, regardless of age, for what comes out of his mouth. And homes should be based on the cornerstones of mutual respect, love, and accountability. There is no entitlement. If you play the entitlement game in your home, you'll create BratZ—with a capital Z. You'll create children who think they are in the driver's seat of life's car. Who think that their happiness is what's most important in life, and that they are "entitled" to not only what they want but anything and everything they want, when they want it.

*Nothing in life
is a free ride.*

*The sooner
children learn
that, the better.*

Many of us have unwittingly done this to our kids. We've spent far too much time snowplowing our child's road in life—making far too many decisions for her, giving him too many choices, letting him off the hook or making excuses when he's ir-

responsible, ignoring the little and big ways she disses us. After all, you want your child to like you, don't you? No wonder kids think they're in charge, and parental threats and cajoling don't work!

Many moms in particular tell me they feel like slave dogs, doing whatever their kids want them to do. And they're exhausted by the end of the day. (If you're saying, "Amen, brother!" read on.)

There are all sorts of experts who talk about boosting a child's self-esteem. They promise that if you praise your child for this and that and smooth his road in life, you'll land in the wonderful world of Oz and live happily ever after. But I'm here to tell you, after nearly 4 decades of helping families—as well as parenting 5 kids with my lovely wife—that often the opposite is true with that approach. Far too many families have landed on a stretch of road where they wish they had never gone.

You want your child to emerge as a healthy, contributing member of your family and society, right? *Have a New Kid by Friday* is a game plan guaranteed to work. *Every time*. It'll help to produce the responsible adult you'll be proud to call your son or daughter now and down the road. It'll ratchet down the stress level in your home and give you freedom you've never experienced before in your parenting. It'll even provide some chuckles along the way. (Just wait until Fun Day! More on that later.)

If you're thinking, *This sounds too good to be true. There's got to be a catch*, you're right. There *is* a catch—you. *You* are the key to changing your child's thinking and actions. For this to work, it requires you to become the kind of parent you want to be. It requires your decision to stand up and be a parent rather than a pushover. So give me 1 week to change *your* thinking and actions, and you'll be amazed at the results!

There will be times in this book when you're going to squirm because you're not going to like the suggestions. But I can offer you a 100 percent guarantee: if you follow the simple strategies in *Have a New Kid by Friday*, in just 5 days you'll have a good kid on your hands. A kid who has figured out that life isn't all about him. That other people do count in life. A kid who says thank you for the things you do for him. You'll have a new atmosphere of mutual respect, love, and accountability in your home. And you

just might find a smile creeping onto your face far more often than you could have imagined.

How can I guarantee that your relationship with your child can change so dramatically in just 5 days? Because I've seen this transformation in hundreds of thousands of families *every time* these strategies are followed!

Have a New Kid by Friday isn't just any old book. It's a game plan that *really works*. Even better, anyone can do it. It doesn't take a PhD in rocket science. Want to have a great kid? Want to be a great parent? Take the Leman 5-day challenge.

*If you're thinking,
This sounds too
good to be true.
There's got to be a
catch, you're right.*

On Monday, I'll reveal what your kid's life strategy really is—and why he continues to do the things that drive you bonkers.

On Tuesday, we'll talk about the 3 most important things every parent wants for their child—and how to teach them in a way the child will never forget.

On Wednesday, we'll take a look down the road. Who do you want your child to be? What kind of parent do you want to be? You can get there with my time-tested "3 Simple Strategies for Success."

On Thursday, we'll identify the 3 pillars of true self-worth and learn how to develop them in your child.

*Want to have a
great kid? Want to
be a great parent?
Take the Leman
5-day challenge.*

On Friday, you get to be the shrink. We'll review the principles and the action plan you've been developing since Monday and get ready to launch it upon your unsuspecting children.

The "Ask Dr. Leman" section provides practical advice on over 100 of the hottest topics in parenting. Read it straight through A to Z or use the index in the

back of the book for a quick find.

Then there's what I call "Fun Day." It's my favorite day of all. After launching your plan, you get to sit back and watch the fun . . . and the confusion on your child's face. It's a parent's best entertainment.

If you don't give up, I guarantee you're going to hit payday. I know. I've seen those benefits in my relationship with my own children, who span the ages of 15 to 35. Sande and I are proud of them. They've all done well in school and life in general. Unlike me, they haven't been to traffic court and driving school. The interesting and wonderful thing is that they really love each other. They all make tremendous sacrifices to be together. And check this out: they love and respect Sande and me. They even like hanging out with us. Even our 15-year-old daughter's friends acknowledged to her the other day that her parents were "cool."

In *Have a New Kid by Friday*, I've taken nearly 4 decades of marriage and parenting experience—including my clinical experience as a psychologist, my personal experience as a father of 5, and the many stories I've heard as I've traveled around the country, bringing wit and wisdom to family relationships—and combined it all into one little book. I've done this because

I care about *your family*. I want to see you have the kind of satisfying relationships in your family that I see in my own. I want you to experience a home where all family members love and respect each other.

Your children deserve that.

You deserve that.

And nothing would make me happier than to see it come to pass.

After launching your plan, you get to sit back and watch the fun . . . and the confusion on your child's face. It's a parent's best entertainment.

Monday

Where Did They All Come From?

Why do your kids do what they do . . . and continue to do it?
Your response has a lot to do with it.

Four-year-old Matthew was in a bad mood. His mom could tell that as soon as she picked him up from preschool. All he wanted to do was argue with her. Then he delivered the vehement kicker from the backseat as they drove home: “I hate you!”

If you were his parent, how would you respond?
You could:

1. Let the kid have it with a tongue-lashing of your own.
2. Ignore the kid and pretend he doesn't exist.
3. Try something new and revolutionary that would nip this kind of behavior in the bud . . . for good.

Which option would you prefer?

If you responded with a tongue-lashing of your own, both of you would leave that car feeling ugly and out of sorts. And what

would be solved in the long run? You'd feel terrible the rest of the day. Your son would go to his room and sulk. One or both of you would eventually end up apologizing (probably you first, since your parental guilt would reign; then, because you would feel bad for losing your temper, you'd probably end up liberally dosing the child with treats).

If you ignored the kid and pretended he didn't exist, it might work for a while—until he needed something from you. With a 4-year-old, that lasts about 4.9 seconds since there are so many things he can't reach in the house (like the milk in the refrigerator on the top shelf). The problem is, if you don't address the behavior, you'll spend the rest of your day steaming under the surface . . . and kicking the dog.

This mom decided to go out on a limb and do something revolutionary. She was very nervous; she wondered if it would really work. She'd read all the discipline books and tried so many methods. None of the other techniques had worked. And Matthew was . . . well, getting to be a brat. She couldn't believe she was actually thinking that about her own child, but it was true.

She sighed. *Desperate times call for desperate measures.* But this new technique she'd heard about made so much sense. It had worked for three of her girlfriends. They said all it required was her standing up and being a parent, using consistency and follow-through in her own actions, and not backing down. She knew that would be the hardest part. She was a wuss when it came to Matthew. When he turned those big, blue, teary eyes on her, he always got what he wanted.

But today things were changing, she determined. She was going to give this new method her best effort. She had to do something. Matthew was driving her crazy. Just last week he'd thrown a temper tantrum in the mall; he'd bitten the neighbor girl when she wouldn't give him a toy of hers that he wanted; and the preschool had told her she needed to do something about Matthew's aggressive behavior toward his classmates.

Once she and Matthew got in the house, she didn't say a word. She went about her business, putting away the shopping bags from the car. After a few minutes, Matthew wandered into the kitchen. Usually chocolate chip cookies and milk awaited him there. It was his routine after-preschool snack.

"Mommy, where are my cookies and milk?" he asked, looking at the usual place on the kitchen counter.

"We're not having cookies and milk today," she said matter-of-factly. Then she turned her back on the child she'd pushed 11½ hours for and walked into another room.

Did Matthew say to himself, *Well, I guess I'll have to do without that today?* No, because children are creatures of habit. So what did Matthew do? He followed his mother to the next room.

"Mommy, I don't understand. We always have cookies and milk after preschool."

Mom looked him in the eye and said, "Mommy doesn't feel like getting you cookies and milk today." She turned and walked into another room.

By now, Matthew was like an NFL quarterback on Sunday afternoon—scrambling to get to the goal. He followed his mom into the next room. "But, Mommy, this has never happened before." There was panic in his voice. He was starting to tremble. "I don't understand."

Mom now knew that Matthew was ready to hear what she had to say. It was the teachable moment: the moment when reality enters the picture and makes an impact on the child's mind and heart. It's the time when a parent has to give her child the straight skinny.

"We are not having milk and cookies today because Mommy doesn't like the way you talked to me in the car." Again, Mom turned to walk away.

"But, Mommy, this has never happened before." There was panic in his voice. He was starting to tremble. "I don't understand."

But before she took three steps, Matthew had a giant meltdown. He ran toward his mother and grabbed her leg (after all, he is part of the ankle-biter battalion). He was crying profusely. “I’m sorry, Mommy! I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

Time for another wonderful opportunity. The mom accepted Matthew’s apology, gave him a hug, and reminded him that she loved him. She also told him how she felt when he talked to her like that. Three minutes later, things were patched up, and she let Matthew out of her embrace. She began again to go about her work.

What did she hear next from Matthew? “Mommy, can I have my milk and cookies now?”

It was the moment she feared. She steeled her courage and said calmly, “Honey, I told you no. We are not going to have milk and cookies today.”

Matthew was stunned. He opened his mouth to argue, then walked away sadly.

Let me ask you: will that little boy think next time before he disses his mother?

Why Little Buford Misbehaves . . . and Gets Away with It

Why is it these days that so many children tend to diss their parents, to act disrespectfully? Why are so many parents caught in the roles of threatening and cajoling and never getting anywhere? What’s going on here?

Kids do what they do because they’ve gotten away with it!

It all comes down to who is really in charge of your family. Is it you or your child? Today’s parents often don’t act like parents. They are so concerned about being their child’s friend, about not wounding their child’s psyche, about making sure their child is happy and successful, that they fail in their most important role:

to be a parent. They snowplow their child's road in life, smoothing all the bumps so the child never has to be uncomfortable or go out of her way. Why should she? She's used to having things done for her. Mom and Dad have become mere servants, doing the whims of the children, rather than parents, who have the child's long-term best in mind.

Parents today are also great excuse makers, and they tend to put themselves in blame positions—"I couldn't get her homework done because I had a business dinner"—rather than calling a spade a spade: "My daughter didn't get her homework done because she was too lazy to do it." They spend more time warning and reminding than they do training.

Kids do what they do because they've gotten away with it!

As a result, today's kids are growing more and more powerful. They're all about "me, me, me" and "gimme." They are held accountable less and less and have fewer responsibilities in the family. To them, family is about not what you can give but what you can get. Fewer children today consider others before themselves because they've never been taught to think that way.

Every child is a smart little sucker, and he has a predictable strategy. In the daily trial-and-error game designed to get the best of you, he's motivated to win because then you'll do anything he says. That means if he tries something, and it works, he'll try it again. But he'll ramp up the efforts a little. Instead of simply crying when he doesn't get his treat, he'll add a little kicking too. If slamming the door causes you to go trotting after your teenage daughter to hand over the car keys like she wanted, she'll be more dramatic the next time she wants them. Children are masters at manipulation. Don't think they're not manipulating you.

That's why your child's behavior has everything to do with you. If you allow your child to win, your child's smart enough to try the behavior again next time. *Have a New Kid by Friday* is designed

to give you a whole arsenal of tools to use without shooting your kid down. But it'll also accomplish something else if you follow the principles: it'll help you be the kind of parent you want to be so you can have the kind of child you want.

*Children are
masters at
manipulation.
Don't think
they're not
manipulating you.*

These principles work with 4-year-olds, 14-year-olds, and even CEOs of million-dollar companies. Just try them and watch them work. The basic principles may seem hard-edged, and some of you may be squeamish at first. But you came to this book because you want to see changes in your home, and you want to see them fast. Well, I'm that kind of guy. If you want me to hold your hand for 1½ years while you talk through all your problems over and

over but don't really want to do anything to change them, you've got the wrong guy. But if you want to face life square on and do things differently for your entire family's welfare, you've got the right guy. People are astonished at the changes that happen in their homes in just 5 days. Teens have gone from mouthy and rebellious to quiet, respectful, and helpful. Screaming, tantrum-throwing toddlers are now saying "please" and "thank you."

So give this book a chance. Think about where you'd like to be. I can help you get there.

Attention, Please

Did you know that everything your child does is for a reason? This is called in psychologist speak, thanks to Dr. Alfred Adler, the "purposive nature of the behavior." When your child misbehaves, he's doing it *to get your attention*. All children are attention getters. If your child can't get your attention in positive ways, he'll go after your attention in negative ways. That's because a child's private logic (the inner dialogue that tells him who and what he is and will inform

his entire life) is being formed *right now*. And children naturally think, *I only count when people notice me or when other people are serving me. I only count when I dominate, control, and win.*

Here's the good news: what children learn, they can unlearn. Author Anne Ortlund has said, "Children are like wet cement—moldable and impressionable,"¹ and she couldn't be more right. Children are malleable—up to a point. But as they grow, their "cement" hardens. That's why the earlier you can start addressing your child's Attitude, Behavior, and Character, the better. (More on this in the "Tuesday" chapter.)

The problem with training is that it takes time, and parents today don't have time and don't make time. Some kids spend most of their days in what I call "kiddy kennels" (day care), then they spend their late afternoon and evening time in multiple programs: gymnastics, choir, baseball, etc.

When I used to teach at the University of Arizona, I worked with classes of 300 students—including graduate students, medical doctors, and nurses—in an auditorium. I'd bring in families and problem solve with them. Then I'd ask the students basic questions:

1. How do you think this child learned his behavior?
2. Why is he misbehaving?
3. What are the parents doing about it now? Why doesn't this work?
4. How did the parents say they feel about this behavior?
5. At what level is this child's behavior—stage 1 (attention getting) or stage 2 (revenge)?
6. What do you think these parents should do?

One family who was struggling with the behavior of their son told me all the activities he was involved in. Other than school, that young man had something every single night of the week, and he was only 10! My advice to the parents was, "Cut the extracurricular activities. All of them. Instead of taking your son to counseling,

stay home and spend time together. The behavior you are seeing is because your son wants and needs your attention. He's desperate for your attention. And no coach is going to replace the role you have as parents in the life of your child."

When your child is acting up or acting out, what is he really saying? "Pay attention to me, please!"

If you don't pay attention to your child in the right way (we'll talk more about that in the "Thursday" chapter), your child ups the ante to the next level: revenge. "I feel hurt by life, so I have a right to strike out at others, including you." If your child is at this level, you really need this book. Many children who proceed to the revenge stage are headed toward the beginning of a rap sheet.

Power Struggles

When you choose to do battle with your children, you'll never win. You have much more to lose than they do. Your teenage daughter couldn't care less if her shirt is too tight, but you care, and she knows it. So what is she implying as she flounces down the stairs, dramatically crosses the kitchen, and bounces out of the door with a backward look? "I dare you to say anything!"

You'll never win in a power struggle, so don't go there. Instead I'll teach you a different way, a better way. A way in which you can establish your authority in the home.

Creatures of Habit

There was a classic study done in which researchers conditioned pigeons to peck 3 times in order to receive their reward, a pellet of food. Then, after the birds were trained, the researchers changed the reinforcement schedule. Birds got a pellet every 97 pecks, then every 140 pecks, then every 14 pecks. Those pigeons were so confused, they didn't know what to do. They had learned their behavior

so well that they continued, day after day, to peck 3 times to get their food.

Children, like pigeons, are creatures of habit. If you don't believe that statement, just try leaving out one thing in your bedtime routine as you're tucking your child in. Listen to what happens: "Uh, Mommy, you forgot to rub my cheek. You always rub my cheek." Remember Matthew, who was used to the routine of milk and cookies after preschool? It was only when his routine was broken that he was ready to listen to his mother and learn to behave differently.

Children learn a behavior, then keep pecking at it to get their reward. That's why those of you who have younger children will have an easier time—your pigeons have had less time to peck for the reward. If you have a child 12 years old or older, he has had a lot more time to peck for those pellets. It will require more effort on your part. But you can still do it by Friday if you stick to your guns. If you want your child to be responsible, I'll show you how to get there. If you want him to be teachable and listen, I'll show you how to get there. It's what you both deserve.

So how do you effect change in your relationship with your child? You retrain your pigeon. You use consistency and follow-through to make your point, never wavering from the goal.

How Does It Work?

Let's say your child wants McDonald's at the mall, but you don't have money for

When you choose to do battle with your children, you'll never win. You have much more to lose than they do.

Think about It

What is your #1 challenge with your child right now?

In that situation, think of how you could use the following principles:

1. Say it once.
2. Turn your back.
3. Walk away.

McDonald's. He pitches an all-out flailing temper tantrum, and you're terribly embarrassed. What do you do?

"Mark, we're not getting McDonald's."

Then you turn your back on your child and walk away.

"But, Dr. Leman, wait right there," some of you are saying. "You don't mean you should leave a 6-year-old alone at a mall, do you? How could you just walk away?"

Ah, but here's the key. Your child doesn't want you to go away. He won't allow you to get very far. He just wants to do battle with you. He wants to win.

As soon as that child takes a look at your retreating back in the crowd, all of a sudden his fit isn't so fun anymore. Winning the battle isn't so important anymore. Finding and following Mommy—his safety zone—is.

Let's say you see your 3-year-old purposefully knock over his 18-month-old sister, who's just learning how to walk. Are you angry? Of course. That was downright mean, and you're not going to stand for it. Not to mention the fact that 18-month-old Caroline is now crying. But first you take a breath and think through your strategy. Then you call Andy over to you.

"Andy, do you need some attention today? If you need a hug, all you have to do is say so. Just come on over and ask me for a hug. You don't have to push your sister over to get it. That kind of behavior is not acceptable."

You took the fun out of that behavior by naming the purposive nature of the behavior for the child. By doing so, the child knows that you know exactly what happened and why he did what he did. You're the one in control, not him. He doesn't have a reason to do it the next time.

Let's say your teenager throws you some choice words because you're having chicken for dinner—again—and she says she hates chicken (even though a week ago she asked to have it). When it's time for her to go to Miranda's to "study," you say, "We're not going

to Miranda's." Then you turn your back, walk away into the next room, and start folding clothes.

Just like that 4-year-old who wanted his milk and cookies, your 14-year-old will pursue you. "What do you mean we're not going to Miranda's? You always take me to Miranda's on Tuesdays."

"We're not going to Miranda's because I don't appreciate the way you talked to me earlier."

You turn your back and walk away. No matter what pleading, what tantrum, what apology happens, you don't take her to Miranda's. She has to be the one to explain to Miranda why she can't come. Of course, she might present a different take on the situation than you would, but what does that matter? You've made your point, and your daughter will think through her words more carefully the next time.

If you want your child to take you seriously, say your words once. Only once. If you say it more than once, you're implying, "I think you're so stupid that you're not going to get it the first time, so let me tell you again." Is that respectful of your child?

Once you've said it, turn your back. Expect your words to be heeded. There's no peeking over your shoulder to see if the child is doing what you say. There's no backtalk, no argument. You've said your words calmly, and they're over.

Then you walk away and get busy doing something else.

Will your children be mad? Shocked? Confused? Will you have a few days of hassle? Oh yes!

But let me ask you something. How do you feel after you get into a skirmish with your child? Angry? Bad? Guilty? Do you yell

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and then beat yourself up the rest of the afternoon for doing so? Do you “should” yourself (“I should have done this; I should have done that”)? Are you the pigeon running through the maze, trying to get the reward of making your kids happy? Do you really want to live like that?

How do you deal with your 16-year-old when you discover a *Penthouse* magazine under his bed? With your 2-year-old who kicks you in the stomach when she’s riding in a cart at the grocery store? (I once had a child kick me at a restaurant, and I didn’t even know the kid. Talk about an embarrassed parent.) How do you handle the “I hate you/I love you” every-other-minute switches in your adolescent? The phone call from the principal letting you know your fun-loving son went a little too far this time?

What to Do on Monday

1. Observe what’s going on in your house. What areas in your relationship with your child really bother you?
2. Think about how you’d like things to change.
3. Decide to take the bull by the horns.
4. Expect great things to happen.

What’s normal (or is there normal?) and to be expected? What should you major on and what should you let go? In the next chapter, we’ll talk about the 3 things most important to parents nationwide: Attitude, Behavior, and Character.

Remember, children are like pigeons. They need to work a bit for their rewards. Because they are creatures of habit, they need consistency and follow-through or they’ll get lost in the maze. They also need to know they don’t have free reign to run all over that maze and still expect a reward at the end of it.

Suppose you and I went through life following our feelings for the next 30 days. We said exactly what we thought, did what we wanted, didn’t do what we didn’t want to do. What would life be like at the end of those 30 days? A mess! We wouldn’t have a job because we would have dissed our boss. Our friends would have said, “Forget you.” And someone would have shot us on the expressway.

Today's children need guidance. They need accountability. They need to be taught that there are consequences for their actions (or for their inaction). Otherwise their lives will run amok.

The other day, when my daughter and I were at the airport, we watched 3-year-old twins slugging each other. What was Mom doing? Talking on her cell phone. What was Dad doing? Reading the newspaper. I told my daughter jokingly, "Those are the kind of kids who will make your dad a wealthy man."

Parent, it's time for you to step up and be a parent. Your child needs to know that you mean business—what you say is what you will do. You are not to be dissed, and if you are, there will be consequences. Immediate consequences. And you will not be talked out of giving them.

Critics will say, "But won't you make your child feel bad and guilty?" I hope so! It's important to have a little guilt in life. And feeling bad can accomplish a heap of good.

Just wait and see.

Uh-oh, caught me. But I'm sure glad you did. I thought I was such a great mom. My parents were so authoritarian that I said I'd never be like them. I didn't realize that I'd gone the entirely opposite way. I hardly ever say no to my kids. I've been running ragged just to make them happy, and they're still not happy. Everybody tells me how much I'm doing and what a great mom I am for doing all this stuff, but I know the truth: I have a hard time standing up for myself. No more. A week ago I adopted your principles of "Say it once, turn your back, and walk away." They really, really work. I'm stunned. My son willingly took out the garbage yesterday, even without me asking him, and my daughter brought bread home from the store just because she noticed we were low. I can't believe the change!

Millie, North Carolina

I attended your seminar about changing a child's behavior last week, and it was even more powerful than I realized! My week has been so peaceful and easy with my 3 kids (14, 8, and 6)! My children have responded wonderfully. And I've changed too. Not only am I setting limits for them, I'm doing it with compassion. No yelling at all, and for me that is just too wonderful not to let you know.

Delighted in Georgia

I love listening to you—especially your humor and personal stories (like the one about hawking a gob out the window and your son copying you). They make me laugh. But they also helped my wife and me come to a very important decision. I had just lost my job and didn't see anything on the horizon in our immediate area. My wife has had a job and loved it for years. So now I'm a stay-at-home dad for our son . . . and loving every minute of it. It's the best decision we ever made, and it saved us a lot in day-care costs too.

Stephen, Michigan

I've cried, I've prayed, I've thrown up my hands, but nothing worked . . . until now. Your "B doesn't happen until A is completed" has turned around my relationship with my children. The first three days I used the principle I felt terrible, because I wasn't used to being consistent on anything. But when I saw the changes in just three days, that spurred me on to finish the job. I now can take my 2 toddlers to my girlfriends' without fear of embarrassment or having to listen to them scream. My 3-year-old walked up to me and asked yesterday, "Mom, may we have a snack?" This coming from the girl who would have ordered me a week ago, "Get me a snack!" It *works!* It's the answer to my prayers.

Kendra, Texas