

Fear & Respect

What's the difference?



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Fear and Respect: What's the Difference?

There's an old saying you hear from bad bosses sometimes. They say, "It's better to be feared than loved." We disagree. It is better to be trusted than feared.

The words "fear" and "respect" go hand-in-hand in the minds of many parents. In fact, confusing these two concepts is a very common mistake we see parents make at the Idaho Youth Ranch--which is why teaching parents the difference between fear-based and respect-centered parenting is one of the key ways we help rehabilitate families.

So what **is** the difference between fear and respect?

Fears vs. Respect

Put simply, fear is forced, while respect is earned. The cultural misconception that if children fear parents, respect will come naturally is simply false.

Think about this in "adult" terms. Who is the better boss, the one you are afraid of or the one you trust and respect?

Respect by definition means a feeling of deep admiration for someone. Fear does not lead to admiration.

Using fear to correct a child's behavior will more often lead to the child *hiding* the behavior as opposed to changing it.

Remember that all kids— yes, even teenagers— crave your approval. It is better to have your child motivated to make the right decision instead of afraid of making the wrong one.

If your child fears you, they are far less likely to come to you voluntarily for help when they need guidance, advice, or assistance as they grow older and develop more autonomy--leaving them to struggle without your help.

A Two Way Street

It is easy to think that because your child is still developing that their emotions are underdeveloped. The danger here is this: kids' emotions are just as real and overwhelming as yours are to you. The difference is, they haven't learned the tools to cope with them yet.

So when your child is afraid of you, they don't have the perspective to understand you are tired or frustrated from a long day. They only see that their advocate and protector whose opinion shapes their entire world is unhappy with them.

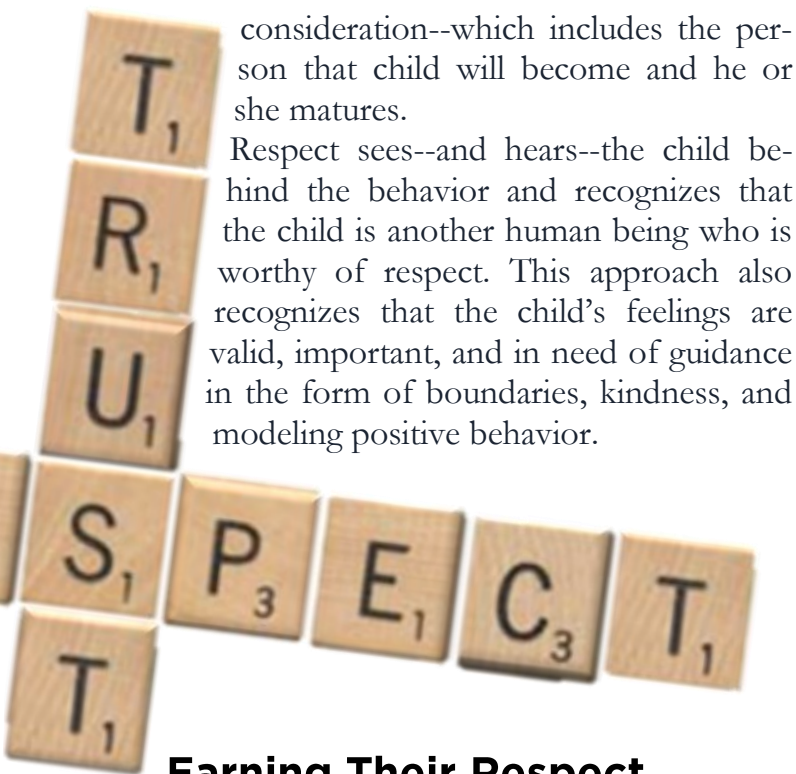
Long term, this will result rage, mistrust, and resentment from your child. Moreover, your child will likely suffer from low self-esteem when you use this approach.

Choosing to earn your child's respect to encourage good choices and good behavior is the best way to foster lasting bonds and give them the tools to manage their emotions and choices for a lifetime.

Seen vs. Heard

A fear-based approach sees behavior only and responds with a damaging tactic. A respect-centered relationship takes the whole child into





consideration--which includes the person that child will become and he or she matures.

Respect sees--and hears--the child behind the behavior and recognizes that the child is another human being who is worthy of respect. This approach also recognizes that the child's feelings are valid, important, and in need of guidance in the form of boundaries, kindness, and modeling positive behavior.


Earning Their Respect

The good news is earning your child's respect isn't difficult. As a parent, you are the center of your child's entire universe. Children naturally love their parents unconditionally and trust their parents. Respecting your child begins with listening to them and treating them the way you want them to treat other adults. Instead of saying, "Put your dishes in the sink," try, "Don't forget to put your dishes in the sink, please."

This works with both teenagers and small children. A parents job is to prepare children to be successful in the "real world." By teaching them instead of scolding them you are setting

In the long run, the difference between fear-based and respect-based parenting is the difference in your relationship with your child--and your child's relationship with life. Where will your child turn when he or she faces difficulty in life or wants to understand something? He or she will look for guidance where he or she feels heard. On the other hand, children who fear their parents are more likely to hold back their fears and concerns and find themselves in trouble. Put it another way. Adults have lots of different kinds of relationships, right? Think about the relationships adults have with each other. For

example, think about what a difference it would make between having a boss you fear and a boss you respect. A respectful boss encourages your creativity, ideas, and input whereas a "fear" boss wants employees who take orders. Would you want a spouse you fear? How about a friend? Try to remember that the relationships you have with our kids is a relationship, and that those tiny people are still people.

Don't fall into the mindset of equating fear with respect when it comes to raising kids. Know the difference, and put that difference into action! 

Calm Down

One of the first skills we teach kids and families is "moment to pause." This skill is all about recognizing an escalating situation and doing a self check-in. In other words, don't react out of anger and think before you speak. Parents who react out of rage or frustration can do a lot of damage to their child's self esteem. Think about what your desired outcome is. Did they sneak out? Why? Did they bomb a homework assignment? Ask those why questions. This will help you understand their motives and help your kid take responsibility. In therapy we call this square breathing. Inhale to the count of 4, hold it for 4 seconds, exhale to the count of 4, hold it for 4 seconds then repeat. Doing this simple breathing exercise will go a long way to helping you stay clear headed and calm. Parents at IYR actually use these technique on younger children, too. When your child is throwing a fit and all you want to do is get them to stop screaming in the grocery store, teaching your child to breath instead of shouting at them or spanking them will help. If you want your children to respect you, you have to respect them. Shouting and intimidation only creates resentment and mistrust. The next time you feel yourself getting frustrated, remember to take a breath and proceed with respect.



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