

HOLIDAYS MEAN MORE THAN HEARTBURN

Frustrated parents can reign kids in with consistent discipline

© 2001 By Jim Fay

Every parent has dreaded one family get together or another. Whether it's a birthday party, Thanksgiving Dinner, or a New Year's celebration, we've all seen situations where youngsters have become the center of attention at the expense of everyone else's enjoyment.

A child becomes so out of control or demanding that people begin to think, "Oh, great. Here we go again. Why can't his parents do something about this? We didn't come here for this!" Others are embarrassed for the parents, thinking, "Thank God that's not my child." In most cases, the parents themselves are embarrassed but not sure what to do to regain control.

A few simple Love and Logic[®] guidelines can help parents stop this potential nightmare and make holiday get-togethers joyous occasions where kids and parents all have a good time.

Kids quickly recognize a parent's reluctance to handle discipline in "public."

Don't fall into this trap. A child's radar picks up on parental insecurity and rushes in to capitalize on a chance to do things that are not acceptable: "Mom isn't going to discipline me here. Now I can finally get my way. People are going to know I'm here and in control. Watch me!"

Family and friends appreciate a willingness to provide loving discipline.

They know about kids and how they should behave. Most will not criticize you for taking some time to deal with misbehavior, but many will look down on you if you don't live up to your parental duty.

Excuse yourself while handling the situation.

I remember a dad who had his misbehaving two-year-old sit at his feet during dinner. The child screamed and carried on while dad calmly addressed those at the table with, "Excuse us. As you can see, we are having a little situation. I'm sure you all understand." And they all did. Later several relatives told him how proud they were of him for being willing to deal with his child in a calm, loving manner.

When kids cause a problem, hand it back to them.

This is an important Love and Logic rule. For example, if a child starts whining about sharing a particular toy or the lack of pizza on the dinner menu, don't rush in and save the child. Instead, try: "Thanks for bringing that to my attention, I know it can be frustrating. Please let me know how it works out." Many children quickly learn to solve their own problems rather than bringing everything to Mom or Dad.

Hold a Love and Logic Strategic Training Session.

Two parents I know made plans to use their next family gathering as a learning opportunity after an especially bad experience. Mom and Dad secretly hired their youngster's least-favorite baby-sitter to follow them to their family visit. The baby-sitter waited in her car. As soon as the child started acting up, the parents called her on the cell phone.