

Newbies
Discipline Young Children
Episode 41

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[Theme music]

SUNNY: We all want our children to do what we tell them to do. But even the most obedient children fall short sometimes. So when is it time to discipline your child? What systems seem to work best? And how do you make this transition when your child is just now learning right from wrong? This is Newbies.

[Intro/Theme music]

SUNNY: Babies don't come with instructions. So there's Newbies, helping new moms and new babies through the first year.

Hey everyone and welcome to Newbies. Newbies is your online on-the-go support group guiding new mothers through their baby's first year. I'm Sunny Gault. I'm a mom with four kids, ages seven, six and twins that are four.

Now this is a very special episode of Newbies because we're trying something a little bit different. We're actually partnering with Pregnancy Magazine for this episode. We've never done this before, but we're broadcasting live right now on Pregnancy Magazine's Facebook page. So if you happen to be watching us on Facebook live, go ahead type in the comments, introduce yourself and hey, you never know. Maybe we'll even have some opportunities during the recording for you to participate and read some of your comments on our podcast.

First time we've ever done this Facebook live thing. We're hoping to outreach and tell more people about Newbies, so hopefully this is something we can continue in the future.

Today we are talking about how to introduce the idea of discipline to your children and our expert today is Jen Lumanlan. She has a Master's degree in Psychology, another one in Education. Jen, you are truly an overachiever. Jen is also the host of Your Parenting Mojo. It's a podcast available on the Parents On Demand network. Jen, thanks so much for being with us today.

JEN: Thanks for having me.

SUNNY: You know, Jen, I have to admit, when it comes to the word "discipline", I feel like there's this stigma around it. It's almost become this bad word. But I would love to know from your perspective, how would you define discipline?

JEN: Yeah, I always actually like to look back to the etymology of a word and find out where it came from. So the word "discipline" actually comes to us from the Latin "discipulous" meaning pupil and that it kind of went through "disciplina", which means, instruction or knowledge. And it's still used that way in academia, but it's really not used that way in parenting anymore.

If you look it up online, the definition is actually the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior using punishment to correct disobedience. And my first thought when I read that was, "sounds like dog training!" Yeah. So I think a lot of parents want to raise a child who can think for themselves rather than just blindly following whatever their friends tell them to do. And it's kind of hard to say, "You can think critically, but not until you leave my house!" So we have to kind of keep in mind, what is the long game here, what do we really, what skills do we really want our children to leave our house with? And that's what we're working towards. And psychologists actually get worried about children who don't ever answer back, who don't question what their parents are saying because what that means is someone's exerting a lot of control over that child and really kind of keeping that child under the thumb.

So yes, discipline has become a bit of a bad word and I hope that in this episode we can rescue it a little bit and bring it back to its roots of learning.

SUNNY: Yeah. And you know, you use the word, you mentioned the word "punishment" as part of that definition. And I think that's where a lot of people get hung up because again, "punishment" has this negative connotation because it's associated with "discipline". I think that's why we think discipline is this bad thing. We think about punishment. And I think if we could get beyond that a little bit, I think that discipline wouldn't be this, this horrible thing in everyone's mind. And I, and I know we're going to talk about some, some ways to discipline that would go against that typical idea of punishment, but I think we would go a long way if we re-define things a little bit.

JEN: Yeah. So we should start thinking about it as learning and how to help our child learn rather than how to be the person who inflicts something on our child.

SUNNY: Exactly. So Jen, how do we know when it's time to start disciplining our young children? Because a lot of people that are listening to Newbies and

they're on the Pregnancy Magazine Facebook page, we have really young children, right? They may have just been born in the last few months. Parents may not even be thinking about discipline yet. But trust me to everyone who's listening, there will come a time when your beloved child does something that you do not want them to do. And we obviously have to correct that type of behavior.

So when is a good time to start implementing this, especially when they're just now starting to learn right from wrong.

JEN: Yeah. For me, I think it came earlier than for most parents. I was, I remember actually pretty clearly standing in the shower one day when I think my daughter was about four months old, which is obviously too early for discipline, thinking, "How do I instill in her a sense of what's right and what's wrong without being the parent who is always the one who says no?", you know. So that she doesn't go to my husband and ask 'cause he's always willing to say yes. And so I was already thinking about that. And then of course your child gets a little bit older and I think when most people start thinking about it is when the child becomes mobile because then it becomes it moves away from your child is somebody who sort of sits there and waits for you to give them things. And all of a sudden your child is going and investigating the world for themselves. And that can require the parent to step in and basically to keep the child safe. And so that's, I think when a lot of parents start thinking about these things.

SUNNY: Okay. So it's not an exact age, it's more about the child and when the child starts to know right from wrong and starts doing things that need to be corrected.

JEN: Yeah. Yeah. And then I think there's a big shift around age two as well. When parents start to have bigger expectations for their child, their child's vocabulary is expanding a lot. You start to think about manners and well, if they can always say, "I want yoghurt", can they not remember to say "I want yoghurt, please". And so there's sort of a shift in expectations around that age as well.

SUNNY: Okay. So let's go ahead and talk about some of these common types of discipline. You may or may not have had a chance to discipline your child and in these styles. I want to talk about some of the common ones that are used and how effective they seem to be. But before we dive into this conversation, I feel like we have to do a little bit of a disclaimer off the top. We know that the topic of discipline again is a very hot button topic. It probably ranks right up there with like circumcision, right? And so we just want to make a blanket statement off the top to say that we are not saying that certain disciplines are right versus wrong. Trust me, I have four kids and the way that I choose to discipline my children are very, very different.

And so I realize that with other families, you got to do what works best for your family.

We're hoping to give you some tools that you can use. So if something isn't working, you could go to something else and find something that works best for your family. So Jen, let's start by talking about timeouts. Timeouts seem to be effective based on your personal experience and professional opinion?

JEN: Timeouts, I grew up in England and timeouts weren't really that common when I was a child, although I believe they are more common now. They're not called timeouts though, I think in England, they call it the 'Naughty step'. You're going to put the child on the naughty step. And the basic idea is that the child is being removed from you, from the area where you are for some period of time that is considered developmentally appropriate. And I think if you did remember being in timeout, this is perhaps easier to conceptualize, but just think back, what were you thinking about during a timeout? Right? Where are you thinking about what you did and how, sorry you were that you did it? Or were you thinking about how unfair the system is that you have to go and sit on this step by yourself and that actually you're just, sorry, you got caught.

So what is having the timeout, really what is it achieving for us? It's teaching us that when our child does something that we don't want them to do, that we're going to withhold our presence. Which for them at a very young age is critical for them. It's, it's how they view themselves. You know, they see themselves reflected in us when we share our disapproval of them, they really take that on. And so when we remove ourselves from their presence and we say, you know, you're going to sit there until I say that you can't sit there anymore, then the child feels that in a way that we as adults probably wouldn't necessarily understand or feel.

SUNNY: Now sending kids to their room - this may be for slightly older kids - but do you consider that a timeout or what is that?

JEN: Yeah, it's the same because you're in a different place, right? You're here and you're telling your child to go there. Yeah, I consider that the same.

SUNNY: Yeah. So I can totally relate to this right now because I have the set of twins that are four years old and we've been having this issue recently in the car, where I'll put them in their car seats - they can actually get in their car seats by themselves - but then they get mad about something and they threatened me by saying, "We're going to get out of our car seats". And several times they have, and obviously that's a very dangerous situation. So as 'punishment', when we get home, they go to their room, but they're not quite - you know, to your point - they're not quite understanding that

that is punishment because there'll be like, first of all, they're together usually, they want to go have some fun or whatever in their room, and then they're like, can we bring our leap pads? I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. You're not understanding. You guys are in trouble. You got out of your car seats. That's very dangerous. And so yeah, they're not quite understanding that it's punishment. I'm thinking in m head, it's punishment. They're thinking it's just break time.

JEN: Let's do this tomorrow. We want to play in our car seat again tomorrow.

SUNNY: I know, right?

JEN: Okay. Well we'll come up with some new tools for you by the end of the episode.

SUNNY: Okay deal. Okay, so let's move on. We talked about timeouts. What about taking things away from our kids like toys and computers and things they really like. I'm actually really curious about this answer because it's a strategy I use primarily with my boys with video games.

JEN: Well, let me flip that around and say, you tell me when you have taken a video game or a toy away from your child, do they ever do the same thing again?

SUNNY: Yes they do.

JEN: Okay. Then I think we answered your question.

SUNNY: Well, yes, but then sometimes I think, well maybe that just wasn't the right strategy for that child, right? Maybe there's a better way of doing it or maybe I didn't take the video game away for a long enough period of time. For me, it always goes back to how can I learn from this and what can I do differently?

JEN: No, that is actually a great strategy to think about what is your role in this. And I think that parents often see children's behavior as something that is isolated to the child. The child is doing this because they are, you know, they're doing something bad or they are, they don't think about things in the right way. When instead, often children's behavior is a reflection of and a reaction to something that you did and that by changing the thing that you did, you can actually change their reaction. And so that's a really powerful tool because you have so much more control over the things that you do.

So, what I would encourage you to do is to step back from the issue - and we're going to talk about this later, I think - and just think about, you

know, what is it that you're asking them to do that they're struggling with instead of coming to it after the fact and saying, you know, I need to punish you for this because you didn't do something that I want you to do.

And yeah, getting in a car seat is something that needs to happen, you know, if you have to go somewhere, it's not safe for them to be in the car without being in a car seat. So, yeah, so we'll talk about some different strategies on that later. But yeah, for the time being, we do see that when we take things away from a child, they basically don't see it as being related to the thing they did wrong. What does taking a video game away have to do with not getting into a car seat? They just, they don't make that connection and usually it happens later as well. So the child didn't get into the car seat this morning, they lose the video game privilege this afternoon. They just don't make the connection there. So that's I think why you're saying that it's not effective.

SUNNY: Yeah. And that's a really good point. And I think also the younger our children are, the less likely they are to make the correlation between the two.

JEN: For sure. Yeah. And the older the child, the more they make the connection, but the more they resent it, you know. You're taking something away. You're using the power that you have over them because you're bigger than they are to take away something that's important to them.

SUNNY: All right Jen. So let's talk about spankings. I know this is highly controversial. I will admit that I have spanked my children. But let me tell you what happens, and maybe this is because I've got four kids, they're close in age or you know, I'm not sure if someone that just had one kid would experience this. But one of the first things that happens, I spank my child. And what does that child do? That child goes over to his or her sibling and hits them, or later on when the sibling does something they don't like, they hit them. And so it's kind of has this domino effect. And I'm not so sure that I want my kids, you know, hitting their brothers and sisters. I'm not so sure this is working in our family.

JEN: Yes. And that is effectively what we're teaching them is if you do something that I don't like, I'm going to use my bigger size and my power over you to hit you to do this thing or, you know, slap your hand or whatever it is. And so what do they learn from that? They're not learning. Oh, I shouldn't do that thing again. Yeah, they're learning, "If I'm bigger than the other person, I have the right to hit them, to slap them, to do whatever it is I want". And so for people who are, who have four children - I don't know how you do it honestly - who don't want their kids to be hitting each other all the time. I think we should take a step back and say what is it we're teaching them by spanking.

And so I actually, I need to do an episode on spanking because that's when I really get into what does the literature say on this. And I'm always very hesitant to speak to things when I haven't done that, specifically when people in different cultures have very different approaches. And so certainly there are people in other cultures who do spank even more than we do and one might say that their children come out relatively well-adjusted.

And so I don't want to come out and say all spanking is evil, but on the flip side of that, most psychological research is done on white people and it is fairly clear from the literature on that has been conducted on white children and white parents, that spanking is not an effective way to increase compliance with parental demands. And it also doesn't help us to raise happy, well-adjusted children, which I think is the end game in this, you know. We need to be thinking about the end game. Where are we trying to get with this. Not just how do I respond to what the child is doing right now.

SUNNY: Right. Okay, Jen so I have a question. Just going to blow your mind here. Do parents have to discipline? I mean, are there other alternatives out there that may yield better results?

JEN: I guess it's more the way you approach discipline. It's not whether discipline is mandatory or not. It's more of a, how do I think about discipline? And another potential way you could think about it is in terms of rewards. Yeah. And I think this is really hot in education right now, where you catch the child doing something good and you praise the child for doing that. Or even you offer them a sticker or in something, you know, the really big case, your five stickers gets you an ice cream or something.

And so what that does is it holds the praise out as a reward and there is tons of scientific evidence on how children respond to rewards. And you may have found this in your own house. If you offer rewards for doing a task like cleaning your room, it works pretty well as long as you're offering the reward. And then what happens when you stop offering the reward?

SUNNY: They don't do it!

JEN: The child stops wanting to clean their room. So it doesn't matter really whether you're using praise or stickers or whatever the reward is, the child sees it all the same way - as a reward. And they make their activity contingent on getting that reward. So I think a lot of parents also think, well I'm going to praise my child because if they don't, then the child's going to have low self-esteem. They're not going to think I love them. They're not going to think I care about them. And what the literature

actually says is that praising children rewarding them, encourages children to do things just to get the reward rather than doing things because they want to. What we want them to do is to do things because they want to do it, because they care about the successful functioning of the family.

SUNNY: So we have a reward system in our house and I want to get your take on this Jen. It's marbles. So we have a marble jar and we have a marble bank if you will. And every week the kids get marbles for doing different things. They can get marbles taken away if they do bad stuff, but they are also rewarded with marbles. And then at the end of the week, they can either cash in their marbles for a smaller prize or they can bank their marbles and then work up towards a bigger prize. So it seems to be working really well in my family. But now based on the conversation you and I have had, I'm thinking, Oh no, then I'm going to have to like wean them off of this in some way later down the road.

JEN: Okay. Well for my first thing is always, if it's working, don't stop doing it immediately.

SUNNY: Okay, good.

JEN: But again, think about your longer-term goal. When in five years time, do you want to be giving them marbles to put clothes on?

SUNNY: No, not really.

JEN: And if the answer to that is no, then yeah, you're going to need to stop doing that eventually. Whether you do it cold Turkey or whether you kind of phase it out and use another system. So I think if it's working for you right now, then I always say if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And I don't think I was the first person to say that, but in the long-term, what you want to think about is where you're going. And so if there are people out there who are thinking about these kinds of systems before they set up a marble system, what they may want to think about is where are we heading with all this and what are some other tools that we could use as well. And I think we're going to talk a lot more about those after a short commercial break. [inaudible]

SUNNY: Yes! Actually great. Nice lead in there Jen. So we're going to take a quick break. When we come back, Jen will share some alternatives to traditional ways of disciplining your children based on decades of scientific research as well as what's worked in her own family. We'll be right back.

SUNNY: All right. Hey everyone. Welcome back to the show. We are continuing our discussion with Jen Lumanlan and in the first half of our episode we talked about some traditional ways parents discipline their kids and then

the overall effectiveness of those methods. And now, here in the second half, Jen is going to share some alternatives, especially if your child is a little bit older. Wouldn't you say Jen, these work better with a little bit older kids?

JEN: Yeah, usually when the child is able to talk, is when some of these strategies really work. But you can keep them in mind. And some of them particularly are the kinds of things that you can do with younger children even if you're not so explicit about them.

SUNNY: Okay, great. So yeah, so let's go ahead and run through each of these and then Jen give your take on these as we go through our list here.

The first one is, 'Try to have yes be your default answer'. Now, Jen, to be honest with you, as a parent, when I read this, I'm completely freaking out because here's the thing. So I've got four kids, right? And I think about how often I say no throughout the day. No, you can't do this. No, you can't do that. So then to change my response to be yes is like, oh my goodness. If I said yes to everything my kids wanted, that's like all I would do all day long.

JEN: Okay. All right. And this one is particularly good for younger children because you're not necessarily saying yes or no all the time, but you're often redirecting them. You might pick them up and put them somewhere else. And so I think it can be good for younger children and parents of younger children to just think through what happens if I just let this play out for a minute.

And so the basic idea - and this I understand this is really hard to do at first because I went through this as well - is before you say no, just take a breath and ask why am I about to say no and if there's a really good reason, then go ahead and say no. And by really good reason, what I usually mean is something related to respect for people or respect for things. And so if my needs are not being respected, so my daughter wants to scream in the living room and it's giving me a headache, it's driving me nuts, whatever. That's not acceptable. That's a reason to say no. If she wants to draw on the walls, if she wants to do something that disrespects our house or her clothes or whatever it is, that's not okay too. That's disrespect of property of things. Anything else in my view is fair game. So then I say yes.

SUNNY: Oh boy.

JEN: So what that allows you to do, I think children really struggle when we waffle when we say no, you can't do something. And they say, oh, please. And they say, oh well, okay then but I didn't really want you to. But yeah,

you can do it. And what they learn then is to keep nagging you until you say yes. But if you have a clear reason in your mind for why you say no, then then you'll have no trouble sticking with it at all. You'll put your foot down, it'll be firm, your voice will be firm, your child will firmly understand that you are clear in your mind that this is not going to happen. This is not okay and they won't do it. You won't let them do it. But otherwise they get a lot more freedom.

So if my daughter wants to go outside without a jacket on and it's cold outside, I say, sure. What's she going to learn from that? That it's cold outside. She needs a jacket. Right. You know she's not going to die. She's not going to melt. If it's raining, she might get a little bit wet. I'll bring a rain jacket with me and when she decides she's tired of being wet or she's too cold, I'll handle the jacket and say, it looks like you're a bit cold. Right. And she'll put it on, you know, if she wants to go outside without shoes on, I'll say, you remember last time you went out, you go to splinter and she gets to make that decision for herself. Do I want to risk getting a splinter again or should I go and get my shoes? It's her decision. She learns more from going through that process of analyzing the information, of making the decision for herself than she does by me saying, you may not go outside until you have shoes up.

SUNNY: So Jen, what happens if you have a strong-willed child who could be doing something to ultimately hurt themselves and they keep doing it over and over again. So in my case, one of my twins is very strong-willed and she is anti-wearing clothes right now. She'll wear like underwear and cover up with a blanket and that's it. And she keeps getting sick. So me saying to her, you're going to get cold, you're going to get cold. That doesn't do anything. She gets sick. She really doesn't learn from the situation.

JEN: Okay. So did you ask her why she doesn't want to wear clothes?

SUNNY: Yes.

JEN: Okay. What'd she say?

SUNNY: Well, she doesn't really give me a good answer. She just kind of whines.

JEN: Okay. And well to dig deeper on that, why do you want her to wear clothes?

SUNNY: So she doesn't get sick? How does not wearing clothes make you sick? Well, when you're not protecting your body you get cold. I mean, she's usually shivering during these conversations cause I do bring this stuff up and I try to explain to her why she needs to wear clothes.

JEN: Okay. Well, I think this gets to a couple of strategies that we're going to talk a little bit more about. But, what I would do is - not at a time when she is shivering under a blanket, but at another time when maybe she's in pajamas, you're getting ready for bed or whatever other time when you're both relaxed, you're both in a good mood - I would just talk to her about it and say, you know, I'm worried about you. I'm worried that you're cold when you're walking around the house not wearing any clothes. Can you help me understand why you don't want to wear clothes and just go into it with a really open mind.

You know, you may think it's kind of crazy to have this conversation with a young child. I've been having this kind of conversation with my daughter since she was, since she just turned three. And so when they're very young, what you can do next is brainstorm some suggestions with potential solutions. And so when the child is very young, they're not going to be able to come out and give you five potential ways that they could fix this situation. But what they can do is respond to your suggestions and over a time you shift that process so that you are providing some suggestions and the child is providing some suggestions and you generate this mutually agreeable list.

So what I would encourage you to do is to have that conversation with your daughter and just say, you know, I'm, I'm worried about you. Let's talk about why this is difficult for you. And let's think together of some ways that we can get through this situation. Because I want you to be comfortable and it seems like you're not comfortable and I want to look at you and know that you're not freezing. That removes you from the stressful situation where you're like, "Put clothes on right now!" and you don't want to do it then.

SUNNY: Okay. The next one is, 'Don't get into power struggles'. Aw, but Jen, they're so much fun!

JEN: Oh it is? Really? You like the power struggles?

SUNNY: No, no, but honestly, power struggles happen way too often in my house.

JEN: So the first thing to recognize is when you're getting into a power struggle, that's really the key moment. So maybe you've asked your child to do something small that seems really reasonable to you and they say no. And you think, "Ugh, this is not a hill that I want to die on right now. But I feel like if I just backed down, they're going to realize that they can just walk all over me".

Okay. So what do we do about that? So there's a parent educator named Robin Einzig and she has a fabulous phrase for this. It goes, "Drop the rope" because it's only a power struggle when somebody is pulling on each end of that rope. If one person drops the rope, there's no power struggle. So you drop the rope. And I'm going to give you an example of how I've done this. So when my daughter comes home from school, she takes off her shoes and you know, she wants to go and do stickers or whatever it is, and she would just abandon her shoes in the hallway.

Okay. And I would say, Caris, could you please put your shoes on the rack? And the first time I did that, she just said, no, I don't want to. You do it. Okay. So do I stand there and say, you will put your shoes on the rack before you go and do anything else. And what's she going to do? She's going to stand there and say, no, I'm not. You're going to put [inaudible] Is that a hill that I want to die on? No, that is not a hill that I want to die on. It's not a safety issue. It's not the same as being strapped in your car seat. So my go-to phrase now is, well, in our family, we all help each other out. So I'm happy to do it for you this time, but I'd appreciate your help next time. And so what that does is again, the same parent educator, Robin Einzig, she has this phrase, "Model graciousness".

And so what I'm doing to her is I'm modeling the idea that in our family we co-operate with each other. Everybody pulls their own weight. We all have to do certain tasks, but we all help each other out as well. And this is an occasion when I'm going to help you out. And it takes maybe two or three times to say that phrase after she says no, and now with almost without fail and sometimes with a gentle reminder, she puts her shoes away when she walks in the door.

SUNNY: Okay. And then how long did it take for her to do that on her own?

JEN: Two or three times of saying it. Two or three days.

SUNNY: Okay. That's good, huh?

JEN: Yeah. And so the key is pick your battles, you know, the safety issues are non-negotiable. If it's something that really is just a power struggle for the sake of having a power struggle because you want them to do something that is desirable but not a safety issue, it's easier in the long run and it gets you further towards your goal of raising a healthy, well-adjusted child who wants to cooperate with you, who wants to contribute to the running of the family to model graciousness to them.

SUNNY: Okay. The next point, 'Brainstorm on mutually acceptable solutions'. Now the brainstorming part I'm thinking is for older kids, but I guess you could provide younger kids with some possible options.

JEN: Exactly. And we talked a bit about this with your daughter and not wanting to put clothes on. So it's that kind of same idea and I really got the strategy from the book, 'How to Talk So Little Kids Will Listen'. So that's a really great read if anyone's interested in digging deeper into some of these strategies. So yeah, in the beginning, you're going to have to supply more of the alternatives and your child can pick which one they like. And as you move on, as my daughter did, she can start to generate solutions that can work. And so another example of how this has worked for us is we - as I'm sure you have done as well - struggle with brushing teeth.

SUNNY: Never.

JEN: Why everybody struggles with brushing teeth. I don't know, but we do. And so I was tired of it. And so at a time that was not time to brush teeth - it was during the day - I said to her, you know, I'm having a really hard time with his teeth brushing thing and I see it makes you so upset and it makes you miserable and it makes me miserable too. And I don't want to do that. So let's think of some other things that we can do and some ways that we can make this acceptable to you. And so I just started listing out some ideas and one of the ideas, we brushed teeth wherever you want to brush teeth. And she's like, yes.

So now we brush teeth in the living room. Okay. Do I care if we brush teeth in the living room? No I don't. And why does she want to brush teeth in the living room? Because it allows her some control over the process. Because this is a safety issue, you know? Yes. If we miss brushing teeth one night, it's not going to make your teeth fall out. But if we go through this thing every night and every night I say, okay, then we won't brush teeth then yeah, that is a safety issue. So we can't skip brushing teeth. And so how can she insert some control in that process? She can choose where we brush teeth. Yeah. And so that's what she picked and it works for us.

So brushing in the living room may not be the thing for your kids, but I'm guessing if you came up with a list of five options they might have, the older ones would have some ideas as well. And maybe the younger ones could pick from your list. And over time they'll start to generate their own ideas of how you can both reach your goals. Your goal is to keep them safe and healthy. Their goal is whatever their goal is today, that's in control and being a toddler and everybody's needs get met. And so that's why you don't need to discipline. You don't need to send your child to timeout 'cause they didn't brush their teeth because you came up with a mutually agreeable way of getting the teeth brushed.

SUNNY: Yeah, no, I like that. All right. Our last bullet point here, 'Treat your child with the respect with which you would want to be treated'. So, Jen, this is pretty much the golden rule, right?

JEN: Yeah. In an ideal world, although I think it's something that Western, is very foreign to Western parents treating children with respect, really. I think it's without question, we all love our children. That's something that's, you know, it's beyond question. But do we all respect our children? I'm not sure a lot of us have thought about it. I had never thought about it before I started doing this research.

SUNNY: Right. Well, and I think this is a tough thing for many parents to understand because you think I'm the parent, you need to respect me, not the other way around. Right?

JEN: Yeah. Well it turns out, respect is kind of a two-way street. So if you give respect, you get respect. And so yeah, I think a lot of the parenting, the common parenting advice out there is centered around getting your child to agree to do something they're supposed to do. And often it's followed by so that they can get something that they want. And so if you think about it, if your husband ever tried to do that to you, what would you do? You didn't do the dishes today, I'm going to take away a year Game of Thrones or whatever.

SUNNY: No, recliner for you!

JEN: Yeah. So would we want to be treated like that? No, we wouldn't. And so would we ever treat an adult like that? No, we wouldn't. And that's a useful litmus test. You know, would I ever treat another adult like this? And that's not to say that we need to give our kids the run of the house because their brains are not fully developed. They're still learning about the world. They're still learning about us and how to function in the world. And so we don't give them free rein, but we give them boundaries, we give them tools and then within those boundaries we give them freedom.

So yeah, the idea of respected, I think there's a lot of sort of parenting books out there that say if the child is busy playing video games or whatever and the parent wants them to do something like tidy the room, then the parents stands in front of the screen, says it's time to clean your room. If you want to go to the party that we have going on later, you need to clean your room. Do you agree to do this? Do you agree to clean your room? And then what's the child going to say? You're standing in front of my video game. And so the child has to say yes. And if they don't then clean their room, then the so-called logical consequence is that they don't get to go to the party. You know, that's not even logical in their mind being a logical consequence. And it's not respectful. You know, we wouldn't want

this to be done to us if we don't have time to clean up, then we get to it later. We don't have our spouse say, you can't go to the party 'cause you didn't do the dishes.

And so I think, you know, this idea of respect as part of a broader conversation with your spouse and your children about how you want your family to run. And when you're talking specifically about things like mess, you know, I did a podcast episode on this with doctor Andrew Coppens of the University of New Hampshire. And he pointed out to me that parents in other cultures don't see the same distinction between chores and fun things. They just see things that our family does together. And so it's not, you know, you need to do your chores so that we can do this fun thing. It's, Hey, can we clean up your room now? Yeah, it's kind of a mess. I'll help you. And then would you mind helping me doing this other thing? And we're just going to spend time together. You know, we're going to have fun together folding laundry. It doesn't have to be this solid division between chores and fun stuff that I think gets American parents, Western parents in general into a lot of trouble.

And so again, this is the idea of the long game. What's the long game here? When we're out in town with our 16-year-old and we see someone drop their groceries, do we want our child to say you dropped them so you pick them up. We want the child to jump in and say, Hey, let me help you with this. And so what do we need to do? We need to model that behavior for our child to help our child with things instead of punishing them for not doing exactly what we tell them to do.

SUNNY: All right, good. I like that analogy a lot. All right, so Jen, how can our audience find you online if they want to learn more about you and all the work that you do?

JEN: Yeah, the best place to find me is at my website and my podcast website, which is yourparentingmojo.com and so we have 60 plus episodes in the can at this point. We've done episodes on sibling squabbles and how to get a child to do chores that we mentioned briefly and what the scientific research says about potty training and sleep and all those kinds of things. So the best way to stay in touch is to subscribe on my website and then you get the podcast episodes every other week and on the weeks that I don't release a podcast episode, you actually get a newsletter where I round up the latest research and put out calls for questions on upcoming episodes and also occasionally ask for co-interviewers on certain topics.

SUNNY: Oh! Nice. All right, Jen, thanks so much for being with us today.

We love our listeners, so thanks so much for tuning into Newbies today. Hope you guys learned something. I know we learned something new. We

are trying something new with the Pregnancy Magazine Facebook page and doing a Facebook live at the same time. We're recording today's episode, so if you like that, let us know and perhaps we can do it again in the future. You guys have been listening to Newbies. You're so awesome. Subscribe. If you haven't already, Newbies are your go-to source for new moms and new babies.

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