



Possibility Parenting

Inner Voice

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SW: This is SW with Parenting and Child Development Extension Specialist at NC State University, Karen DeBord. Today's Possibility Parenting addresses how children develop a inner voice. Dr. DeBord, what is this inner voice you are speaking about and why is it important?

KD: Sonya- I happen to know you have a son of your own. And you can't always be with him, correct?

SW: That is true and I worry about him when we are apart. Even if he is at school.

KD: Well the idea is to help him while he is young to be able to listen to his own thoughts that can guide him. That way when you are no longer around to guide and help him along the way he can monitor his own choices. For example, when children are young, we give them choices. We have them choose their sock color when they are toddlers or later on we have them decide if they want to do their homework now or 10 minutes from now. Parents give two choices they can live with. The child gets practice making decisions while decisions are on a small scale.

In elementary school there may be more complex issues- such as difficulties over friendships. Let's use an example here that a child named Marian who is upset that Julius is not longer her friend. When she brings that dilemma to you, you can either say, "I don't know what to do" or tell her that it will all be ok and not to worry about it, or ask her what she did to cause this problem with her friend. Most of these options discount the child's feelings or blame the child. A better way to handle this is to first recognize the feelings of hurt, anger or frustration. You might say: "Wow! That sounds tough. You seem hurt by it."

Then ask Marian how she would like to resolve this. Help her generate possible solutions and weigh them. "What are some ways you could work on this?" Be ready with some ideas of your own to help get her started. Then she is left to choose an approach. This is a basic problem solving technique and empowers the child to resolve her own problems.

I'm Karen DeBord with Possibility Parenting