



Possibility Parenting

Whining

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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 children and whining in public places. Dr. DeBord, I have been to the store many times and witnessed parents at their wits end dealing with a whining child. What works?

KD: Whining can be such a nuisance for onlookers and an embarrassment for parents when it happens in public! To stop whining, a child must exhibit self-control.

Remember children *learn* self- control. They are not born knowing how to control their whims and emotions. Not until about 7 or 8 years old are children better able to control their actions by telling themselves what is right and wrong to do. Adults set the example but also give them practice. Add to this that young children have a difficult time waiting and waiting. Time seems endless to them.

One thing I have noticed in public places is that often the children are simply cranky. A child may be hungry or tired. Parents must weigh their shopping or errand needs at the moment with the needs of the child and the difficulty that can occur in a public place during an incident of whining. Plus, think about what behavior you may be reinforcing. At times, these incidents parlay into tantrums.

Let me just offer a couple of tips.

- Prepare the child before entering the store. Tell him or her what to expect by saying “we are going to the store to get 4-5 items on a list I have. That is it. NO treats today.”
- And if all else fails- after one warning, end the shopping trip. There is no need for any physical altercation - just go home. They will understand. Give one warning that you will leave if they cannot stop the undesirable behavior then on the second time, take the child's hand or hold them and walk straight to the car. Stay firm and mean it. It will pay off. It's tough to teach but it will make the “connections” we so desire with our children easier later in life.

I'm Karen DeBord with Possibility Parenting.