

## PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

# *for the adventure of family life*



## 56\_Adults determine the quality of relationships

There is still a double standard in adult-child relationships today: "If the relationship is good, adults take credit for it. If the relationship is bad, the child is difficult!" Is that the case? No! The first sentence is true, but the second sentence isn't really true. When children become difficult, it is a clear sign something is wrong in a relationship important to them, or they are suffering. Children cannot yet say: "Hey Daddy, there's something wrong between us, let's talk." Children can influence the relationship with adults, but they cannot determine the quality of the relationship.

Children can help determine what is eaten for dinner, but cannot dictate the mood at the table. Adults, both at home and at school, are responsible for the quality of the relationship. Why? Because they have the power in this relationship. Even in a company, the boss determines the tone of the company with the way he treats his employees. Because he has the power and thus the responsibility for the way of behaving and mood in the community.

### **How are conflicts handled?**

When children become tyrannical and everyone "must" do their bidding, it is as if the family were on a ship and the parents were letting the children take the helm. This goes wrong. The tone of the family, how conflicts and differences of opinion are dealt with, how mistakes are reacted to, how the boundaries and needs of individual family members are respected are the adults' responsibility because they are the leaders in the family. It's the same at school. Adults determine the tone of conversation in the family and at school - even if a child rages in front of the adult. The adult determines HOW he or she responds to the child. Is the child scolded and insulted, violating its dignity, or is it treated with respect: "I hear that you are very angry. I'm going to the kitchen for five minutes now to calm down. Then I'd be interested to hear what makes you so angry. Think about it and then tell me."

## **Our sore points**

Children's behaviour often hits our sore spots and we freak out. We like to blame the child for our reaction, for our feelings. But are children really responsible for our feelings of powerlessness, anger, pain and helplessness? I am solely responsible for my feelings, for the words that come out of my mouth, as well as for my thoughts and actions.

There are days when we react calmly in crisis situations and others when we immediately jump out of our skins. Our reaction depends on ourselves: Did we have a fight with the boss today, did we not get enough sleep or are we worried about something? It is not uncommon for our children to catch us out with our injuries that we have carried with us since childhood: with our feeling of worthlessness, not being taken seriously and not being heard. That hurts! But children can't do anything about that. We can take our feelings seriously and take care of ourselves. This is how our children help us really to grow up. This is a gift.

## **Let's take responsibility for the quality of our relationship with our child.**

Only we as adults can bear this responsibility. Why? Because we have the power, the life experience and the task of leadership.

Text: Astrid Egger  
[www.familie.it](http://www.familie.it)