

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



57_Adults take personal responsibility

There are days when we react calmly in crisis situations and others when we immediately freak out, for example when the child throws down a glass on purpose, or when it refuses to clean up, etc.

On what does our reaction depend?

On the child? Hardly likely. Then we would always have to react in the same or similar way. Our reaction probably depends more on ourselves: Whether we just had a fight with the boss, we slept too little or something is worrying us. It is not uncommon for us to be guided by patterns that have shaped us since childhood. Many parents are shocked to find they treat their own children like their parents treated them, even though they swore they would do everything differently.

Basically, we have to ask ourselves what kind of relationship we want to build with our children. Inasmuch as we are the adults, we must take responsibility for our feelings, actions, and reactions.

What does this responsibility look like in concrete terms?

For example, if the child intentionally breaks something and I immediately start shouting, once the situation has calmed down I can go to the child and say: "I'm sorry I yelled at you earlier. I was so angry you broke that."

Or if I have the feeling, for example, that I have lost contact with my 13-year-old son, that I can no longer reach him, then I have to ask myself what I can do to improve the relationship with him. Not by giving a lecture about how he should finally listen to me, or by tearfully saying that I had done everything for him and that's my thanks... No, by going to him and - as honestly and authentically as possible saying: "Dear son, I am unhappy with the nature of our relationship. I've tried everything possible to develop a relationship with you. But" - and this is the most difficult sentence - "I didn't succeed. Now I want to know from you: How do you feel about me? What do you think I should do differently?"

Indicate readiness for change

What happens when we approach our child like this and admit: "I failed to build a mutually fulfilling relationship with you. I need your help."? Adults probably have the feeling they are showing weakness and losing their authority. But it is an honest statement that shows the child that I am not blaming it, that I take responsibility myself. And above all: I am taking the first step, I am showing my interest, I am signalling readiness for change.

Your child may respond rudely to your question and say: "Huh, I have no idea. Leave me alone." Then don't give up right away, don't be fooled, but say: "I can understand that you can't give me an answer so quickly. I'll ask you again in a few days. Please think about it. I care about you." And after a few days, ask the question again.

Take responsibility for the quality of your relationship with your child.

Only you as an adult can bear this responsibility. Take the first step And possibly a second and a third.

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