

## **Aw, Man! Why Can't I Have What I Want? The High-Demand Child: Part I ? The Problem**

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Some children today seem to suffer from the ?I Want It Now Syndrome!?. They think of something desirable (and often expensive) and keep themselves and you miserable with their demands. Their lament is ?Can I have \_\_\_\_\_?? without the slightest hint of reality that they will not get the desired object. They have low frustration tolerance and set themselves up for disappointment and hurt by their unrealistic expectations.

Persistent pester power often works as the child keeps nagging the parent who eventually caves in and forks over what is desired. The child learns that: 1.) If you don't ask, you don't get it; 2.) If you keep asking, you are more likely to get it; 3.) It doesn't cost me anything to keep asking, so why not keep on going?; and 4.) Parents sometimes wear down and give in if the child is relentless in asking. The child can be single-minded in pushing for what he wants -- this is the concept of entitlement. In some children there is a lack of guilt and shame that their actions are irritating others. Unfortunately, many of today's generation of kids are learning the entitlement skills to become tomorrow's pushy telemarketers.

### **I Want To Have My Way!**

Another type of high-demand child craves attention and insists that he or she gets his or her way with others. He must be first in line. The teacher must give her favors. The other kids must play by his rules. She becomes bossy and tells others what to do in infuriating ways. He shouldn't have to do his chores, homework or follow the rules. When things don't happen the way the high-demand child wants, he experiences disappointment and there's an angry outburst saying, ?It's not fair.?

These children expect understanding, affection, praise, and validation even when he/she is in the wrong. They believe other people exist to make them feel good. There is never enough to fill them up. They feel that their life is profoundly unfair if their desire of the moment is not forthcoming. If not continually validated, they can lapse into anxiety, depression and shame.

With this entitlement expectation, the child becomes upset and is more likely to not listen to reasonable parental requests. He becomes agitated and angry when parents set reasonable limits or grounds him for misbehavior. Sadly, too often the parent finally blows up adding more resentment to the child's way of looking at things. This can become a vicious cycle that creates bigger and bigger family upsets.

Parents who feel bad for their child because they think he hasn't gotten a fair deal in life can create an insecurity and false sense of entitlement in their child. When a parent feels guilt, sorrow or pity for their child and tries to keep him from feeling frustrated over small things, the child becomes more demanding.

One teenager told me that he knew he had problems because he was angry all the time and friends and family were angry with him.. His problem was that other people would not do what he told them to do! He had developed a totally irrational way of thinking because his parents had given in to him from the time he was small because they felt guilty because he had learning problems.

Life becomes a series of irritations and annoyances because it is unrealistic to think that the world will revolve around one person. The child who runs away from handling disappointments in life because he can't handle his bad feelings will always find ways to make himself a victim. He learns to blame his mistakes and misbehavior on others. He may burst into tears or yell 'I hate you?' or tell you what a horrible parent you are. He becomes a high-frustration child who acts out his anger or turns it into depression. He may turn to those extreme behaviors called the 'five aces' that teens use to get adult attention: disrespect, running away, addictions, threats of suicide and threats or acts of violence.

The unrealistic expectation here is 'I get to do what I want. The world (he, she or they) should give me everything I think of or I get to blow up.' Teachers and peers suffer from the child's unrealistic demands and react to him with anger. The child who never learns to tolerate feelings of agitation and frustration often becomes defensive and can get a reputation for having a temper and becomes known as a troublemaker. As people come down on him, he feels angry and justifies his anger by denying his part of creating the problem with his unrealistic expectations of preferential treatment. His self-esteem deteriorates as the people around him seem to turn against him. He does everything he can to try to numb the pain especially by getting angry. He tries to cut the pain and escape the emotional disappointment of not getting his own way. He becomes fearful of his own feelings becoming phobic in a sense of every feeling except the exhilaration of getting what he wants and anger when he doesn't. The child then begins to see himself as the victim of all times. In his limited way of thinking, being told no is to regress back to an erroneous conclusion: 'I am not loved. I am not wanted. He, she, they don't care about me.' Blaming someone else takes the heat off themselves and acts as a gratifying source of tension resolution. Blaming becomes a substitute for feeling guilty. Children learn to substitute anger to break into feelings that make their self-esteem drop. Anger becomes a more empowering emotion in the eyes of the child. Of course, this is an error in thinking.

One twelve-year-old girl told me, 'When I hear 'no' I feel uncomfortable with myself. My normal breath stops and I do a short, staccato breath which gets caught. I feel my energy drop and I want to slink away. I get angry instead and yell and blame someone else. Yelling at them makes others angry at me.'

### **The Temperamentally-Challenged Child**

Some children are temperamentally difficult and harder to raise. They are easily frustrated, strong-willed, high-strung and impulsive from birth. Some children are more aggressive and irritable and have a temperament that responds quickly to frustration. These children have a different neurological wiring of their central nervous system which may be due to genetic factors or injury to the brain. They usually have a higher-than-average interest in novelty and seek highly pleasurable activities, making them at earlier risk for alcohol and drugs.

These children don't have the ability to tune in to their body states and experience their emotions except for anger, fear, excitement and satisfaction on achieving their goal. They may have considerable trouble in talking about vulnerable feelings and act impulsively on their feelings instead of talking them through. Without having feelings of hurt, sadness, grief and vulnerability

of their own to reference, they do not understand the feelings of others. They cannot experience empathy because they do not understand how to put themselves in someone else's shoes. These types of personalities are called repressors.

High-demand children are often hyper-focused in going after what they want. They can feel temporary happiness on achieving their goals, but it is short-lived. They almost always have some lack of guilt and shame. They don't understand the reasoning that certain of their actions hurt others.

The type of discipline that works best with these children is based on learning theory with immediate consequences where their freedom is curtailed. The temperamentally-challenged child will need extensive training in emotional intelligence and self-regulation. They are a different kind of child and need a different type of parenting. There are books that discuss this industrial-strength type of child and how to be an industrial-strength type of parent. Avoid permissive, humanistic types of parenting books and read parenting books such as *The Challenging Child: Understanding, Raising, and Enjoying the Five ?Difficult? Types of Children* by Stanley Greenspan and Jacqueline Salmon, *The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children* by Ross W. Greene and *Parenting the Strong-Willed Child* by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long.

### **Entitlement and the Ability to Deal with Feelings and Problems**

Many people clearly do not know how to deal with feelings of distress and discomfort. People in the United States have the highest percentage of mental illness in the world according to a recent fourteen-nation survey published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, with twenty-six percent of the population having problems dealing with their feelings and behavior. The report said that it is possible that people in the United States have high expectations of success that they are not able to live up to which leads to higher frustration, anger and depression. Millions of people are on anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs to quell their feelings. No one has taught them how to calm themselves or express and release discordant feelings. We live in an angry society.

The media has helped create a sense of neediness in children who lack a sense of inner self. Our children are being bombarded constantly with television messages about feeling good about material things. Our advertising media creates a sense of not being complete and having an inner void of always wanting something -- something else and something more. ?You can have it all? is the message of entitlement. That attitude along with ?it's fun to be bad? changed our culture. The writers of *The Simpsons* started popularizing the bad attitude in their bad-boy character Bart Simpson. Children started taking this attitude on to be cool. It became cool to be devious, mischievous and snarl at people. Bart shows kids what fun it is to get in trouble and use people to get what you want. The attitude has spread quickly among certain types of children and has become incorporated into our culture like an ugly virus. Sarcasm and verbal insults on the playground lead to feeling hurt and wounded. Children who are home schooled and kept away from negative television messages are less likely to develop this negative attitude.

### **Getting ?Stuff? Never Equals Good Self-Esteem**

Because the child has not learned to express and regulate feelings, he bottles up inside and becomes more emotional. He is more reactive to criticism and drops into shame more easily. He becomes overly preoccupied with how well he is doing or how he looks. He must protect himself from failure by not trying or by giving excuses. A child who does not learn to regulate his own feelings is affected for his whole life. He becomes a prisoner of his uncomfortable feelings, always searching for that next thing that makes him feel better? typically a fast food or a toy. He swings back and forth between anticipation and excitement when he gains the prize and loss and unhappiness when it's not forthcoming.

Children often tie their expectations for getting something new to their self-esteem. They feel good if they get it, but unhappy, angry or bad if they don't. Unrealistic expectations often fuel the child's brain that is excited about the prospect of getting the desired toy or treat only to feel shot down if they don't. The new object temporarily stimulates positive endorphins in the child's brain making him feel better. Of course, the good feelings do not last so the child must ask for something new to regain that temporary fix of feeling good when he gets something new. Good self-esteem does not equal 'stuff'. Research shows that people with good self-esteem are contented with what they have and have a sense of meaning-- a sense of purpose -- to their life.

Children who attend a school where peer aggression and disrespect are common bring this negative attitude home. They learn that aggressive behavior can make them feel powerful temporarily even though it's a false sense of power. They model negative behavior to their siblings who pick up the disrespectful ways of acting and the whole family is kept in chaos.

This type of child has learned to *turn to something outside of himself* to feel good on a temporary basis. Filling the gaping hole inside with 'stuff' or getting his way teaches the child that the way to take care of feeling bored or anxious is to keep asking and using anger to try to intimidate the other person. He has never learned the necessary skill of obtaining a happy life by delaying gratification. Spending money to feel good is a common way to financial ruin as many people know who have taken bankruptcy because of high credit card bills.

### **Paradise Lost: Early Loss Creates Psychic Wounding**

What are the dynamics that create children who feel entitled? The high-demand child typically has some loss early in his life which struck at the very basis of the self. What he really wants is for his parents to be the grownups, set appropriate limits and structure for him, and show him love and respect. In the psychoanalytic literature, this loss of the early self is called narcissistic or psychic wounding. Some emotional insult has happened and the child feels displaced in the affections of his parents. This loss can change how a child views himself.

The *Prince or Princess Dethroned* is an early wounding situation where the child was adored and received much attention, but this was altered when the next child was born. No matter that the older child was thrilled when the new baby arrived; the thrill of the new baby diminishes when he begins to feel rejected and unloved. Sometimes the feeling of being left out may take some time to develop. There may have been a moment where the child was ignored, shut out or scolded and he developed an idea that changed his life ? 'I'm not loved. I'm not important. They like the baby best.' Jealousy and feelings of abandonment set in as the child's view of himself is radically altered. The child unconsciously feels like the title to Heir or Heiress to the throne has been lost! He has been thrown out of the Paradise of good feelings into the unknown of dealing with confusion, loss, resentment and unresolved grief.

Sometimes it takes only a small incident or a perception of unfairness to create the feeling of being rejected. Any time the child was brushed off and his needs not met because the adults were busy can help create a belief of not being lovable. Perhaps the child was scolded harshly for some not-so-loving actions with the baby. Maybe the parent comes down hard on the older child when the children fight. Parents who take the younger child's side in conflict set up anger and resentment in the older child. A negative belief about his identity forms in the child's mind and then he believes that it is true. Usually he isn't able to talk about it or nothing is resolved if he tries to talk to his parents. For a great book to diffuse squabbling on this issue read *Siblings*

*Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together so You Can Live Too* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

The wounding or injury to the child's self-esteem also can happen when there is an abrupt negative change in the child's life which causes him to lose the source of feeling good about himself. Perhaps the psychic injury happens when the mother goes back to work or back to school or becomes obsessed with a new hobby, leaving him out. Another loss-of-the-self issue revolves around hearing parents fighting, feeling helpless and experiencing out-of-control emotions. Another setup for a child to become insecure and doubt himself is having a critical parent who is quick to point out to the child how he is bad. Having a parent turn to alcohol or drugs and disengage from the child is a sad but common reason for a child to become confused, as many adult children of alcoholics point out.

Divorce rocks a child's world. High-conflict divorces can damage a child's sense of trust in relationships. Entrenched custody battles break into a child's sense of security that the world is a safe place. Having a parent who pulls out of a child's life or does not follow through with visitation can be a major blow to a child's trust.

After the divorce, new stressors come in when a single parent has to spend long hours earning a living and the child is left alone. Or the child may feel displaced when his parent takes a new partner and spends less time with him. It is tough for a child to have to adjust to a new person in the home especially when a new step-parent is stricter than the biological parent.

A death or loss of a parent is one of the most serious blows a child can experience. Sometimes one of the parents is asked to leave the home because of continual irresponsible behavior such as using alcohol or drugs, excessive anger or having continual affairs. Sometimes a parent is not ready to settle down into the responsibilities of family life and yet may complain to the child about how the other parent is unfair for breaking up the home. This dynamic sets up great confusion and anger in the child.

There are many other typical interactions that create abandonment issues. Children crave feeling safe and being in places that feel familiar to them. Moving to a new house or town can be hard on a child. Being left by the parents in early daycare where the child may experience more aggressive behavior from other children also has its effects. Current research shows that 4-year-old children who had spent more than 30 hours a week in daycare were more demanding, aggressive and noncompliant than those raised at home. Children learn what they are exposed to. Being around peer aggression sets off insecurities and the child becomes aggressive himself to ward off feelings of helplessness.

What do all of these situations have in common? They all can initiate a sense of loss accompanied by emotional arousal that the child can't handle and isn't able to process, and then grief, anger or depression. The child feels unloved and feels ashamed of not being good enough to sustain the parent's love and good will. Some children become depressed. Some avoid responsibility for their misbehaviors. Some lose interest in doing homework and interest in learning. Others adopt a negative attitude and look for other things outside himself or herself to feel better such as a gang or group of under-achieving friends that accept them. Many children grow up spending their lives trying to find things that make them feel good, again while denying how harmful the fix to their pain really is.

## Tantrums are a Cry for Help

You can look at a child's continual acting-out behavior as a fire alarm that is sounding a warning. Something is wrong and it's up to you to figure it out. What you see is a symptom of anger. Symptoms are signs that something needs changing. There may be a deeper cause lurking underneath that nuclear meltdown.

What is temper? It's a reaction to a sense of threat or loss. It is substituting one emotion ? anger ? for the initial feeling of disappointment. It is an emotional, hormonal, behavioral reaction preceded by a belief that something should have happened and it didn't. Temper tantrums are an abrupt hormonal discharge, muscular reaction, strong emotions, infuriating thoughts and intense actions.

On another level, temper is the self trying to be heard. The child who has tantrums is trying to communicate something to you, but cannot express what he really needs. What the child really wants is not stuff or even getting his own way. Tantrums are *not* about getting what he can't have. What children really, really truly want is to be loved, to be listened to and to feel validated. He wants some limits put on his inappropriate behavior and he needs to learn some self-regulation skills to handle frustration.

There is an old saying in child therapy training: ?Trust the wisdom of the child.? Children act a certain way for a reason. The child's behavior will tell you what you need to know. A child's continual anger sends out a signal to you ? ?I need something different from what you are giving me.?

Keep asking yourself? what is my child's acting-out behavior trying to tell me? Does he need structure and limits? Is he confused and overwhelmed with his parent's fighting? Has he been shamed by bullying? Does he need some tools to work with his inflexible way of viewing the world? Has he learned an unrealistic expectation that he should be rewarded for not acting horribly? Has there been sexual abuse? Is there an early wounding issue that is hidden? Does he feel that you treat his sibling better than how you treat him? Does he need help resolving life's disappointments? Some or all of the above?

Establish an ?open door policy? for your child where he can come to you to talk about the sensitive topics that young people now face: bullying, peer rejection, sex, alcohol and drug use and suicide. Listen to what is being said and refrain from giving advice or blowing up. Get your child to give the pros and cons of both sides of the issues ? this stretches his mind to exploring other possibilities than his typical way of thinking.

Make sure you and your spouse are on the same page when it comes to choosing techniques of child-rearing. Children sense conflict between parents and can subtly ?work? the more lenient parent to get what they want. Don't allow your child to put a wedge between you and your spouse. If you are too lenient, take training and read books on ?tough love?. If there are disparities in discipline between you and your spouse, get into some short-term couples therapy to explore and resolve these differences.

## **Children Need Small Stressors in Life to Learn How to Deal with Problems**

Does this mean that we should take all stressors away from a child and shield him from all the negatives of the world? Children who do not have to deal with stressors and the accompanying emotions are unprepared to deal with the upsets that the world will present. Research shows that children need to have small stressors and learn effective ways to deal with them as a means of stress inoculation, just as a small amount of a vaccine prevents big illness from happening later on. Children become resilient when they have to face small problems and *are taught the skills to deal with them* so that they are prepared to deal with big problems later on. Helping your child learn about emotional intelligence is one of the most important things you can do as a parent.

One of the best self-regulators of uncomfortable emotions is to learn to talk about them. Parents can model naming their own feelings. The parent could say "I'm feeling irritated because \_\_\_\_." I can feel irritation and I'll breathe into it to release it. I don't have to hold on to bad feelings. I can catch them, name them and then let them go." Later, the parent could say, "I notice you are feeling grumpy. What could you do to help yourself take care of that feeling?" If the child does not want to let go of his grouchy feeling, he could be told to take it to his room to take care of it himself and not bother the rest of the family. Keep giving the message that we alone are responsible for taking care of our feelings. Keep telling your child that he is as mature as he is able to take responsibility for his own thoughts, feelings and behavior! Then back this message up with praise when he shows responsibility.

Help your child develop a feeling language. For example, there are many different words for anger. If your child says "I hate you," ask, "Are you feeling upset, disappointed, annoyed, furious, resentful or irritated right now?" Use your feeling words and you won't have to act it out in your behavior. "Hate" is not an acceptable word to use in our family."

### **I Just Want to be Heard!**

The more you get into trying to argue your child out of his opinions the more he will become entrenched in his own view. Ask him to see both sides of the issue by switching roles. You become the child and he acts the parent role. A survey of youths in juvenile facilities showed that they said if there had been one person who had been available to just listen to them, this might have deterred their delinquent behavior.

You can head off most woundings if you become a "Talk about your feelings kind-of-family." Schedule time to talk about everything without turning this sharing time into a judging and need to moralize opportunity to teach your child a lesson. When a drastic change in the family is going to happen, tell your child that he might have all kinds of feelings about it? good, bad and indifferent.

Prevent that drop in self-esteem that often happens when the child feels his world is careening out of control by allowing all feelings, even the negative ones. It's also necessary for you to put limits on inappropriate behavior. One of the most important things you can do is teach emotional intelligence and help your child learn some tools to cope with negative feelings. Try to get to your child's rationale for seeing things the way he does, and respect his opinions in the areas that are not life-threatening.

Most of all children want to be listened to! So many discipline problems could be deterred if you learn the skill of active listening and schedule the time for being present for your child in nonjudgmental ways. There are several good books on how to listen to your child that teach *Active Listening* approaches. A great book to encourage all family members to learn to listen is *How to Talk So Kids will Listen & Listen so Kids will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. The *Intentional Dialogue* technique from Harville Hendrix's *Imago Therapy* is a valuable approach to explore. If your child does not open up to you easily (and most children find it easier to talk to someone other than their parents) arrange a mentor, relative or another caring adult who can be there to hear your child out. Remember, unhappy feelings talked out are less likely to be acted out!

### **Families Can Learn To Be Respectful**

Watch your own anger. If you are so frustrated with your child that you resort to yelling, the situation will only deteriorate into alienation and result in your child turning to a more rebellious peer group. Watch your own tone of voice and use of sarcasm. Habitual use of sarcasm contributes to the breakdown of the family. Make a family rule of stopping sarcasm by stating that having a loving family is the goal and love never speaks sarcastically. Take an anger management class yourself and do yoga, Tai Chi, meditation or learn the Emotional Freedom Technique.

Set a few reasonable rules that are age appropriate and emphasize respect. Post the rules on the refrigerator. Enforce these limited rules consistently. Keep looking at how your own behavior reinforces your child's disrespectful actions. Apologize for your slip-ups when you speak in an angry tone. Keep emphasizing "We are a loving family and we treat each other with respect."

If your child attends school where rowdy behavior is allowed, complain to the authorities. If there is lack of interest in change on the school's part, research other schooling alternatives. Take your child away from the influence of bad friends and place him where the values of having a good character and working hard are taught. The only time to shape your child's values is while he is young. Take advantage of it.

It's an angry world out there so do all that you can to prevent messages of hate and aggression from coming into your home. Turn off TV shows that show aggressive behavior and violence. Monitor your child's internet viewing. Explain that you cannot support aggressive behavior and violence by buying a ticket to violent movies. Take a parenting class that is appropriate to the age of your child. I recommend all parents take a class when their oldest child is two and a half and a second one before he/she hits the teen years.

### **Bad Stuff Happens! Helping your Child Handle the Disappointments in Life**

What is an exhausted parent who is trying to teach their child that there is more in life than chasing superficial goals to do? Of course you establish a loving family and provide wholesome activities that help a child feel good about his identity in the world. You try to model and reward good choices and solid values. But beware? little monkey see, little monkey do. Be careful what you model? do you want your child to learn instant gratification by turning to food, shopping or chasing the latest fad to feel good? If you use addictive substances or activities to quell stress, they take notice and will be prone to do likewise. If you feel better with a shopping spree, they take note. So avoid satisfying your own feelings with the latest "whatever?". Children learn what is modeled for them.

If you blow up quickly, your children learn that anger is an acceptable way to intimidate others and get their needs met. Educate yourself about how to work with disruptive feelings. We all have overwhelming feelings at times and your child is watching to see what you do with your frustration. Read my article, *Being Hijacked by your Hormonal Arousal Creates Relationship Problems*, on my web site [www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com), to learn about the many new, unique ways to release negative feelings.

The newer Energy Psychology approaches teach the person how to deal with emotional arousal? learning to modulate the emotions becomes the goal of therapy. This is my bias due to my clinical experience of seeing how much faster therapy goes with the addition of these newer approaches to conventional therapy. Once the emotional arousal is calmed, the child can learn to think differently about the problem. Seeing a problem in a new way is called reframing? the old idea is reframed in a way that does not cause a drop in self-esteem. These innovative approaches use acupressure and eye movements to accelerate release of the pent-up emotions as well as inappropriate beliefs. They help the child to not only process the hurt that underlies disappointment, anger and the belief that things must go his way but they help him release it. These techniques incorporate the brain, body, beliefs of the mind and behavior while working on an issue. Symptoms or problems are seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) at [www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com) and The Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT) at [www.tat-intl.com](http://www.tat-intl.com) are two excellent approaches to help the child to deal with disappointment, hurt and anger that he feels when thwarted from his desired goal. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) at [www.emdr.com](http://www.emdr.com) is another approach that works well in unraveling erroneous beliefs, but you will need professional help for this.

Tapping on the body or holding certain acupressure points are gentle forms of self-acupressure which help release the energy held around an issue. These approaches are excellent to help your child release misunderstandings and perceived rejections as well as the deeper feelings that lurk underneath. You can learn EFT on the web, from a workshop or from a trained therapist, or from my book, *Good Bye Ouchies and Grouchies, Hello Happy Feelings: EFT for Kids of All Ages* available at my web site [www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com).

### **Teach your Child to Find his Feelings in his Body**

Talk to your child about how his 'gotta-have-it' beliefs set him up for disappointment and frustration. Don't argue with him? that only reinforces his beliefs that you don't really care. Just comment on what he is doing and change the subject. Make a mild comment something like this: 'If you want X and the reality is that you won't get it, you tie your happiness to trying to get it and make yourself miserable. Why set yourself up to being miserable all the time?' Remind him that realistic beliefs sometimes equal happiness while unrealistic beliefs usually equal misery.

Break into his being so caught up in trying to force you to give into a demand by asking for his body reaction. Get him down into his body (and divert his demands) by asking him, 'How do you feel when I say 'No''? Have him give many different feeling words to this sentence: 'I want (new game, toy or snack food) because I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (hurt, disappointed, annoyed, resentful, frustrated, angry, anxious, agitated, stubborn.) ?

Have your child identify where each of these feelings hides out somewhere in his body. Teach him to locate the sensation in the body each feeling brings up. Ask him to think about being

denied something he desires and look for the tension in his body. Or tell him to ask for something he knows he won't get and you say "No!" emphatically. That can trigger feelings and sensation in his body. Typical places to hold tension are in the stomach, head, hands, legs, throat, chest, jaw and heart. Have him focus on the tightness in his body and breathe into it. Practicing handling the feelings of disappointment teaches him to delay gratification. Practice makes permanent!

Two necessary skills of maturity are being able to ask for what you want and knowing that you won't always get it. Teach your child to directly deal with that sinking feeling when he is told no. In real life every time your child asks for something unreasonable, ask him to prepare to deal with possible disappointment if you give a negative answer. You could say, "Before I give you an answer, get ready to take care of your bad feelings if the answer is no. What are you going to do to keep yourself from being upset? It's up to you whether you feel bad or not."

Remind your child that it is okay to feel any type of feeling but he doesn't have to act it out in ways that harm him or others or turn it inward. All feelings are okay to have? it is what you do with them that counts. You can teach about the appropriate use of feelings and releasing of unrealistic expectations. Here is my basic formula for understanding and working with feelings:

Feelings happen.

Feelings are meant to be felt.

That's why they are called feelings.

Feel the feeling, give it a name, breathe into it, tap on it and let it go.

Feelings are meant to be felt!

It is never okay to hurt others with words just because I feel bad.

### **If You Can't Work It Out within the Family You Need Professional Help**

You may need a mental health professional to get to the bottom of why your child has developed the feelings of being misunderstood, rejected and entitled to get what he wants. For quicker and longer-lasting results, try to find a therapist who can get to the bottom of things and not just join you in trying to shape up the child. The child's deeper hurt, terror and feeling of helplessness and hopelessness must be explored. The psychic wound can be accessed by a talented therapist.

With the right therapist, getting your hurting child into weekly sessions can be a huge return on investment for that which you value most? your own flesh and blood. All therapists are not created equal, however, so search around for the most competent professional who has the skills for Active Listening, going to the roots of the problem, into the feelings of hurt and disappointment, offering solutions and getting healthy communications established again in the family. Be ready to make some changes in your own thinking and behavior.

Anger is a very complicated process that builds up over time and it will take a skilled therapist and some time to sort it out. The woundings to the child's psyche that create distancing and anger can be cumulative. I explored one 12-year old boy's attitude and anger problem and found severe situations that caused him to see the world as an unfriendly place that he needed to defend himself against: 1.) the anger and fights between his parents before the divorce; 2.) the continuing conflict after the divorce; 3.) feelings of injustice when he was punished for misbehaviors when he was five years old; 4.) developing a friendship with an angry boy who had been bullied by his older brothers (this is taking on vicarious anger); 5.) developing feelings of power when he learned he could intimidate others with his outbursts; 6.) ongoing anger at both his mother's and father's attempts to discipline him; and 7.) being enrolled in a rough school where he had to

defend himself against bullies. The boy was motivated to get over his anger problem and the parents committed enough to stay the course for intensive therapy. It did take considerable work. We had to get to the bottom of the hurt, terror and helplessness that he felt. Anger and rage had become substitute emotions to avoid the more vulnerable emotions.

Under most anger is a deep sense of being hurt and betrayed. A skillful therapist can get down to the bottom layer of hurt and loss that anger covers up. When the deepest layers of emotions are accessed, explored and perhaps even released, the child can give up the unrealistic expectations.

Don't hesitate if your child has an alcohol or substance abuse problem. Many addictions start in adolescence. Fifty percent of young people who become heavy drinkers by age 14 will become alcoholics. Alcohol and drugs interrupt and stymie brain growth. Parental monitoring and being active in your child's life are the most important things you can do during this vulnerable time of brain development. Call your health insurance company to see what rehabilitation programs are available or inquire what free or low-cost programs are provided through local behavioral health agencies. The life you save just might be your child's.

Therapy is an investment that can help your child in the early stages of life before negative patterns get solidified. The goal is to instill pride in your child for self control of impulsive behaviors and do the next best right thing. By doing what it takes to ensure that your child learns to regulate his own feelings, you give your child tools for frustration tolerance and delay of gratification and the skills to achieve a responsible life.

### **What a Child Really Wants is Your Love and Limits on Their Behavior**

What we really want is to be loved, accepted and validated by others. Learning to deal with our most difficult feelings so that we can have satisfactory relationships is the first step in being able to love and be loved.

Most of all find ways to truly enjoy your child. The years go by so fast! Provide playful and light moments where there is joy in being together. Cuddle time. Nurturing time. Appreciation time for acknowledging who he is as a truly unique human being. Tie connection and cooperation when you work together as a family with a sense of satisfaction and feeling good. You don't have to always be on guard and make every incident a teachable moment or a correctable experience. Delight in what is right with your child and his unusual strengths and personality and your child will learn to appreciate himself. Catch a child being good and tell the world about it is a sure-fire way to increase positive behavior!

Learn to be a feeling kind of family by staying open to discussions of all kinds of emotions. Keep telling your child as well as yourself, "Feelings happen. They are meant to be felt. That's why they are called feelings." And keep emphasizing, "We are a family! We can make our family a loving one if we treat each other with respect."

## Resources for Parents on the [www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com) Web Site

My free interactive video, *Separate the Big Deals from the Little Deals*, teaches EFT to show children how to cope with disappointment and stop temper tantrums.

My article *Helping Your Child Survive a Difficult Divorce* helps parents deal with their own unruly emotions during this difficult time. There is a lot of good information on the web about divorce. I recommend the book *Dinosaurs Divorce* by Marc Brown and Laurie Krasny Brown. Do a web search for a local Divorce Recovery group for yourself and your child -- a must if either of you is having trouble letting go and moving on. If you are having new blended family issues, find a step-parenting class or a therapist trained in step-parenting issues.

To get a referral to therapists who teach acupressure and utilize energy psychology techniques, see *Finding a Competent Therapist With Great Training: It's Not Just Talk Therapy Any More!* listed at the bottom of my home page.

### **Books on Feelings by Lynne Namka**

To learn to express feelings appropriately by using the ?I Formula,? read *The Mad Family Gets Their Mads Out: Fifty Things Your Family Can Say and Do to Express Anger Constructively*.

Understanding feelings and the Emotional Freedom Technique is taught in *Good Bye Ouches and Grouchies, Hello Happy Feelings: EFT for Kids of All Ages*.

*How to Let Go of Your Mad Baggage* gives a model for understanding and releasing angry feelings.

For lesson plans and specific activities on expressing and releasing feelings see *Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children: 50 Fun Activities for Families, Teachers and Therapists*.

These four books (the Fab Four) cost \$29.95 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling. They can be ordered from: Talk, Trust and Feel Therapeutics, 5398 Golder Ranch Road, Tucson, AZ 85739.