

A UNITED FRONT

EACH PARENT HAS A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO DISCIPLINING AND REWARDING CHILDREN, BUT TEAMWORK IS VITAL IN REINFORCING BOUNDARIES

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Parenthood: A never-ending topic full of triumphant squeals, hugs and happy tears along with exasperated sighs.

Ever found yourself aghast at your partner's consequences of a mere 'stop that' for your child's clothes left on the floor for the umpteenth time? Were you shocked when they admonished your teen with no Wi-Fi access for two weeks when they didn't meet curfew for the first time? If you're a parent, and likely tackling this role with the other person who made them, you've probably disagreed with how they approached it.

To ensure you are both presenting as a "united front" to your children, it is helpful to have a discussion with your partner around these questions:

Do you appreciate how you were disciplined?

If anything, what would you change about your childhood?

Do you remember how bed and meal times were handled?

What were the consequences of poor choices when you were a child?

Do you desire to mirror your parents' methods?

How are your respective answers to the above similar or different?

While you cannot anticipate every scenario, I encourage couples to conduct regular behind-the-scenes discussions to determine your disciplinary style. It is natural to discover you have inconsistent approaches. Importantly, back each other in front of the children then discuss it later. Your children will be quick to work around the parent who is more flexible.

Another crucial aspect is promise keeping.

It's important to maintain safety and security by keeping to that fishing, skating or movie date you promised with your child.

Adversely, you need to follow through with a promised negative consequence.

Understandably, parents become worn down by the repetition required to reinforce appropriate boundaries. Unfortunately, when we don't follow through with that consequence you've warned them about, children fail to learn the natural effect of poor behaviour.

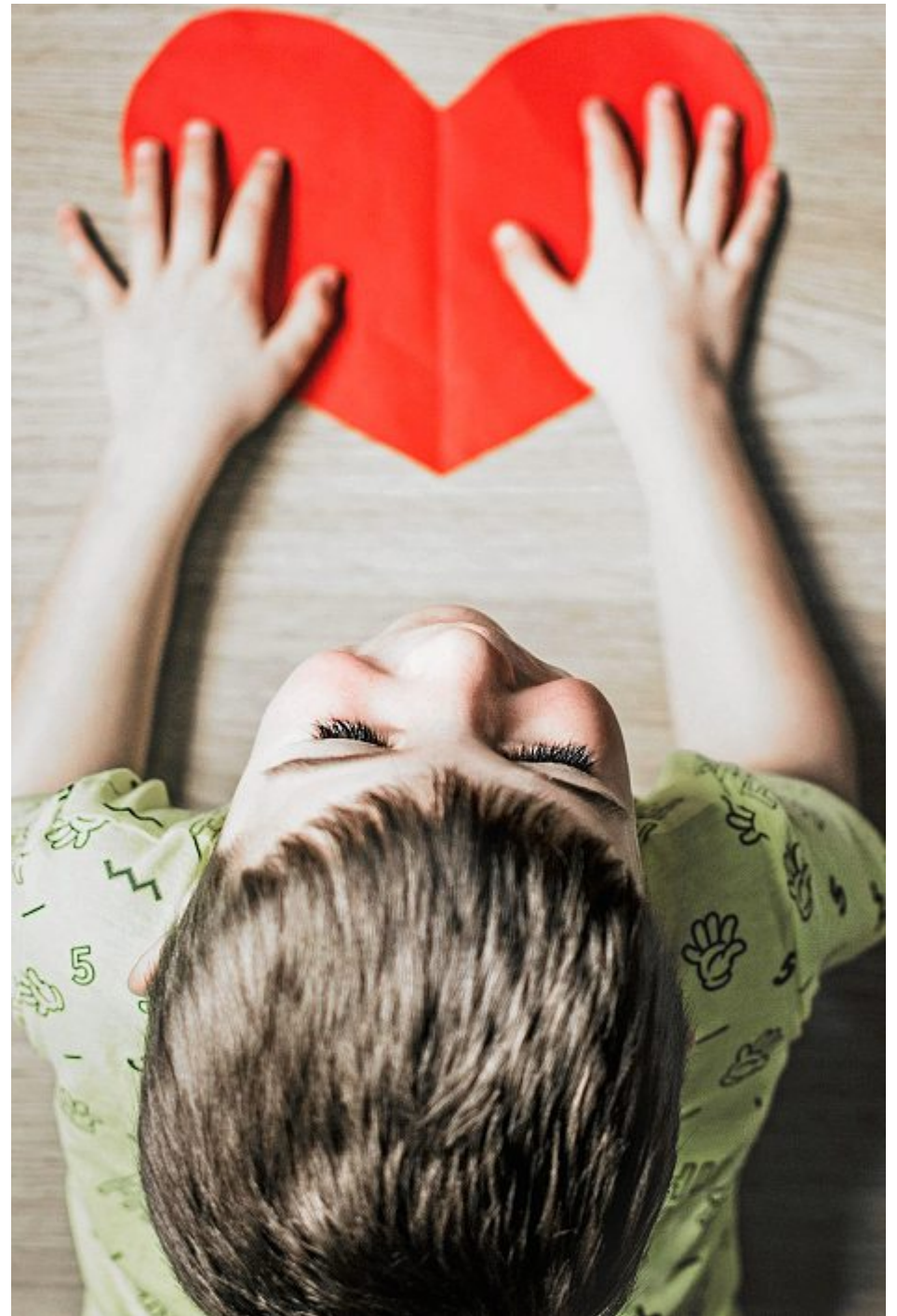
Shielding them from the slightest discomfort now ensures they miss out on powerful lessons for frustration and disappointment later in life. Consequences can be positive reinforcement or negative to discourage. They need to be immediate and consistent.

When coupled with a warm and loving environment, children enjoy the security of understanding firm boundaries as they grow into confident people who respect their parents and others.

You will have equipped them to self-regulate their responses to challenges and failures as well as learn the responsibility to be self-disciplined contributors to society.

Yes, parents it's relentless, thankless and often heart-wrenching to see your child miss out on what they enjoy sometimes – but worth it. They might even thank you in a few decades when they have children.

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