

How Do I Stop Losing It with My Kids?

Getting to the Heart of Your
Discipline Problems

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Dinner is late again, and the living room looks like a failed disaster relief effort. You ask your son to put away his part of the mess, but he ignores you. You turn the TV off; he gives you a surly look. You say, “Don’t ignore me, and get that look off your face!” He mimics you under his breath and doesn’t move. Your face flushes, and you say, “I’m not going to stand for disrespect in my own home, and you’d better move fast if you want dinner.”

He gets up slowly and mutters, “Whatever.” Without thinking, you reach out and slap him. He stands speechless with surprise, anger, and embarrassment running across his face. Suddenly he’s respectful *and* listening to you! You’re surprised, but secretly delighted. It worked! Easy, quick, and effective! Who could ask for anything more?

Your conscience could, and it is. A small nagging voice in the back of your mind isn’t letting you walk to the kitchen feeling guilt-free and good about yourself. Your slap seemed to “work,” but you sense that it wasn’t right. That’s good.

Your unsettled feeling means your conscience is still alive.

Why We Lose Control

This story might not fit you exactly—maybe you never slapped your child—but haven't there been times when your child pushed all your buttons, and you said and did things that later bothered your conscience? Why is your conscience uneasy? Weren't you just correcting your child's bad behavior?

You are troubled because you lost control with your child. But *why* did you lose control? What was going on in your heart that made your child's actions so infuriating? The reason you lost control was that, whether you've thought about it consciously or not, your child was not fulfilling your desires. Let's take a moment to look more closely at what your desires were at the moment you lost control with your child. To help you, consider these questions:

- When you lose control because your child is disrespectful (or disobedient, or ungrateful, or anything else that annoys you), whose agenda for your child has become most important? Yours? Or God's?
- When you lose control, are you most concerned with your child obeying God's will, or your will?
- Whose desires (for peace and quiet, comfort, respect, obedience, etc.) are most important at the moment you are losing control?
- When your child disobeys you in front of others, are you most concerned for God's reputation or your own?

When *your* agenda, *your* will, *your* desires, and *your* reputation become more important than God's, that's a sign you are trying to be your child's god. That's right. Whether you thought about it or not, you want your child to treat you like God.