

## Respect the Kids; They'll Love You Back.

By Kevin Ophoff

Middle schoolers are great people. Each one has the potential to be a great, affectionate, caring, socially engaged member of the body of Christ. However, some kids remain disconnected because they equate relationships with painful experiences. I have witnessed verbal abuse on several occasions and I can tell you that the kids are suffering because of it. Sometimes we don't realize how we come across.

Kids know when you don't think much of them. Our voices convey more than just words. Anger is very damaging to their self-esteem, especially when it comes from their parents and teachers. Yelling at your kids is a terrifying event for them. Imagine having someone way bigger than you, on whom your entire sense of security rests, forcefully conveying an attitude of violent anger toward you. It doesn't matter what is being said; it only matters that the foundation of their world is crumbling. The impact is deadly to your relationship.

Even though kids need correction from time to time, we must remain self-controlled. Admonishment can be given diplomatically (in private) and will maintain a loving relationship between the "grown-up" and youngster. Yelling may be easier but causes the child to lose respect for the adult (they told me this), which makes it more difficult for them to want to obey.

It's not necessary to correct every little mistake. Don't you make mistakes? Kids will be kids. They'll pick it up eventually. I find that it's far better to maintain a loving relationship than to try and effect instant correction by verbal assault. Kids who are relaxed in the presence of adults are far more likely to emulate their behavior and stay connected. Kids who associate adults with emotionally painful experiences will disconnect and go looking for more comfortable associations.

Ask your kids if you need help in this area. If you do, get help.  
Check out this web site: <http://www.loveandlogic.com/>

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