



in CONTROL

Rachel Vecht, director at Educating Matters, questions how parents can strike the balance between being in control and being controlling

There is a mistaken belief that the two main parenting choices are either authoritarian or permissive. However, there is a middle ground known as 'positive parenting', where parenting is carried out with clear limits but in a loving, empathetic way.

Controlling parents mainly use fear, punishment, threats, bribery or shouting to get children to co-operate. But are parents who use this approach actually in control? Many parents have told me that being raised this way damaged their self-esteem and confidence, made them feel guilt and shame, and encouraged them to rebel. They were only compliant when the parent was around and were very focused on not getting caught rather than doing the right thing because it felt good. Often these children end up being overly dependent and unable to think for themselves.

We absolutely need to be in control so that our children are safe and responsible. In fact, they won't be prepared for adult life without our guidance and support. So how can parents be in charge and enforce their positions gently?



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1 Relationship and connection is everything. In a trusting, close relationship, children will naturally want to co-operate and please us. Spend short bursts of one-to-one 'special' time with them.

2 Be empathetic. What children want most is to be heard, understood and valued. When a child is experiencing a difficult emotion, reflect back to them how they are feeling. This way they will calm down more quickly, know you are truly on their side and learn how to articulate their emotions.

3 Notice and mention the positives rather than criticising when they do something wrong. This results in greater co-operation and increases the chances of your child listening to you.

4 Establish clear rules, routines and boundaries

so children know what to expect. Involve your child in creating the rules and at the same time determine the rewards and consequences so you do not make up punishments on the spur of the moment out of anger or desperation.

5 Maintain a united front and agree together on the best approach. If you do not, children may become confused or take advantage, playing one parent off against the other.

6 View mistakes as a learning opportunity. Encourage your child to problem-solve and establish what they could do differently next time.

7 Model being a leader rather than a dictator. Try to balance your agenda and your children's by taking into account their temperaments and stages of development. Respect is earned by our actions and how we communicate.

Rachel Vecht is a primary school teacher, mother of four, parent educator and founder of Educating Matters (educatingmatters.co.uk), delivering seminars, workshops and consultations for parents in the workplace, schools and homes.