



iQuestions Faculty, Dr. John Trent

Question:

My husband and I are polar opposite when it comes to disciplining our children. How can we get on the same page?

Answer:

My wife and I are absolute opposites when it comes to so many things. And unfortunately, one of those is discipline. That happens with a lot of couples.

Let's say, for example, this is you and your spouse—and I don't care who is who. This could be the guy and this could be the gal, or vice-versa, but you've got this Lion and they're strong and take charge.

Then they see this person, and they're sensitive and connected. It's kind of like two halves of the apple become one Washington State Golden Delicious apple. What can happen when kids come along? It could be like applesauce.

Let me give you an example: let's say that the Lion, they're at dinner and their kid who's the Otter—remember, they're the fun-loving playful one—and here's a six-year-old Otter, and what do they do with their glass of milk? Have you ever noticed that? They put it right on the edge of the table.

Now, Lions tend to see problems and want to deal with them *right now*. So the little Otter puts the milk right on the edge of the table and the Lion sees the potential problem and goes: "Hey, move the milk!"



The Otter doesn't see the problems. "I'm not going to knock it over." And they knock over the milk. Now they've got a real problem.

What does the Lion do? "I've got a solution to that problem. Go to your room right now, no dinner!"

What is the Golden Retriever parent capable of doing then? You know, sneaking in later and doing what? "OK, Honey, now here's a hotdog, but no bun. This is punishment."

What I see a lot of times in my counseling practice are well-meaning parents that love each other and love their kids, but they are such polar opposites. You've got one that wants to give the hard side of love, and other that wants to give the soft side of love.

When it comes to discipline, it's not just Lions and Golden Retrievers that can struggle to get on the same page. There's also, for example, opposites that attract and marry and have kids. Like an Otter and a Beaver.

Remember, the Otter's the fun-loving, enthusiastic, party's-waiting-to-happen. They don't really relate to what? Rules.

Then there's the Beaver who loves rules.

This is me, the Otter, and here's my wife Cindy, the Beaver. We had a rule in our home that you could only pull two feet of dental floss out at a time. I won't tell you which kid tried to hang the one that got instituted the two foot rule, but bottom line was you could only pull out two feet of dental floss.

Well, I'm on a trip and call home and I say to my wife, "Hey, Honey. How you doing?" and she goes, "I'm doing great, but I learned something very interesting tonight."

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I go, "What's that?" she says "Well, I learned that Carrie (who's our oldest daughter and the Lion) hates me."

I ask, "Why is that? She's only about 6 years old." And she says, "Well, I was putting Carrie to bed tonight and I pulled out two feet of dental floss, and Carrie went ballistic. She said, 'Mom, I can't believe you make me pull out two feet of dental floss. Dad doesn't make me pull out two feet of dental floss.'"

Because when I was putting the kids to bed, guess what I would conveniently forget? The rules.

Bottom line is, that's when you think—with the phone you're going "Oh, Honey, I'm going under a bridge. I can't hear you, we're losing contact."

I didn't have a dental floss problem in our home. I had a problem that we, my wife and I, weren't on the same page when it came to disciplining the kids.

Realize that opposites can attract, but you need to value the other person's strengths and then make sure that you're on the same page when it comes to discipline, so that you don't have one person running to one side of the ship and one person running to the other.