

Child Behavior Pt. 2

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06.7] ANNOUNCER: Next is Dr. Charlene Wrighton to discuss everything early education about your children or students in our new show, Ed. Talks with Dr. Char.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:21.4] CW: Hello, this is Dr. Char Wrighton and I am here to share some more information with you. I always try to bring as much new and positive information to you so that you can continue learning on how to deal with little guys and early education. Last time, I had done – last podcast or radio show. I had done the show on changing behavior and positive ways to change behavior because I don't know.

I know that they do exist but I don't know too many little children who don't have – misbehave from time to time. There are some who misbehave more than others. These are positive ways that parents and teachers can use strategies, techniques and I want to give those to you so that you can be aware of other ways of not only coping but helping your children to cope and change the behavior.

I had given you many suggestions last time and I'm going to do a little bit of a recap so that as a reminder. Some of the things that we talked about. I definitely want to clarify this again because first of all, parents must take the lead or teachers. You need to assert yourself as the boss.

I think there's little bit of guilt with that. There's a little bit of guilt that parents or even teachers; I think that we don't want to be the authoritarian. I think that has turned into a negative word. We all want to be so happy and you know, flowers and sunshine and butterflies with children and really, in reality, whether you're a parent, a grandparent or a teacher, you do need to take command and control.

[0:02:18.2] CW: I think we're fearful over the word of control. But this doesn't mean control so that the child doesn't create or the child doesn't think of things on their own. This just means, I'm here and I'm going to stop you from behavior that is not good for you, not good for other

children, not good for siblings, not good for mom and dad, grandma and grandpa or whoever it is.

Safety, it's a huge safety issue. That bottom line that adult has in that child's life that caretaker is extremely important. I kind of want to shake people of guilt, of feeling like being the last word in that child's life is really important. This doesn't mean we don't listen to children.

It just means that you're not the child and that the child is the adult. We want to make sure that the roles are properly aligned because that is really critical. This then stops children from tantruming or at least it stops them quicker because you're not going to really listen to it, you're going to find the source of it later and we're going to talk about that.

You know, a child who is tantruming, whether it's in the classroom or in the home, it's not okay. Because what the child is doing is that they're using their body and they're using a lot of loud noise and sometimes flailing and kicking and scratching. In order to get their way in one way or the other or declare their unhappiness.

[0:03:46.7] CW: But it is not the proper way of dealing with it and certainly, you wouldn't want to see a kindergarten child doing that or first grade child or a junior high child or a high school child or any kind of an adult doing that. Obviously, it is something that children do pretty naturally because a lot of times, they just don't have the words to express themselves when they get very frustrated when they're little.

As they do gain that language, if they're still tantruming, kicking and screaming and scratching and yelling and throwing things, then you realize, you have to realize that it is not acceptable behavior and you need to let your child know that it is not acceptable and it will not be tolerated. That's where your strength comes in.

Now, I am not an advocate of spanking, I'm not an advocate of harsh words. What I am an advocate of is first of all, calm voices and I feel like that is really critical as an old teacher, I taught many years, many decades with special ed children who have a lot of behavioral problems as well as academic problems.

I learned very early that if I wanted to change children's behavior and they came with very poor behavior into my classroom, that first of all, I had to love them and then I had to respect them, I had to approve of them. If children know that they are the apple of your eye and if you have 12 children in your classroom, they're all the apple of your eye, if you have 400 in your preschool like Safari Learning is going to have, they're all the apple of our eye. But, they have to learn that they are one among many and then they have to share if they have to share the spotlight and the attention.

Same thing in the home if there's other siblings, even if they're only child, they cannot override what a parent or the parents want or need or what the grandparents want or need or anyone else is in the household. Again, it's raising children to be other-oriented and unselfish.

[0:05:57.1] CW: I'm going to someday soon talk about entitlement and I'm going to talk about children growing up with a feeling of entitlement. I think you can watch from the news what's going on right now in the scandals with the paying for favors from universities and getting kids in.

I won't dwell on that one but we'll see that we have children in – regardless of economics – feeling of entitlement and a selfishness takes over that says, "I'm more important than you or anybody else." That is not the truth, it's not the truth and that's not okay.

When I want you to – when I'm suggesting that you have a calm voice. I've also trained teachers in other teachers when I was in education of the public schools. I also trained teachers at the university level and I'm training – we train our teachers at Safari Learning academy on how to keep the voice well-modulated. I had a teacher who I could tell when she was on her last nerve because her voice would be higher and higher.

Not only did I read that she was losing control but the children two and three and four-year-old children are very fast to pick up on the fact that the parent or the grandparent or the teacher is losing control. They have an uncanny ability to then take over the control and they know that you are feeling a bit helpless.

[0:07:30.7] CW: That's something that has to be changed really, be careful of your tone of voice. You do not want a harsh voice. You do not want a demeaning voice, you don't want to

make the child feel bad about themselves or who they are or their skills, you don't want to deprecate, you don't want to decimate with your words and make that child feel poorly about themselves.

On the other hand, your voice needs to be firm and that you're confident and again, placing yourself in the role of the adult and that is really critical. You might analyze as you're dealing with your children or again, grandchildren or students. Listen to your own voice when you are feeling that somebody is not minding you. Listen to your voice. If it becomes loud or harsh or high pitched, you are losing control.

The child's going to hear it immediately. You want to be able to talk in a very matter of fact, very calm voice because what you're saying is no. That is not okay. No, that is not acceptable. No, you're not getting that, bottom line. With that calm, the child realizes that the adult has that control and that is really important. There's so many fun ways that we can change behavior that doesn't seem like this.

This authoritarian kind of matter of fact or even – it's not cold but you definitely want that strength there. That behavior, we can make it fun and so that's part of some of the things that I want to share with you again today. I shared quite a few really fun activities or ways of changing behavior and I want to go into little bit more detail. I still have some things to share with you.

Power struggles are basically a death knell to having a strength and control in the classroom or in the home. Once you get into a power struggle with a two-year-old, a three-year-old, a junior high student, a high school student. You have lost, you have lost as the adult. If children are older and they get into power struggles with you. That means, chances are, you lost the control as the adult in the family a long time ago.

[0:09:56.5] CW: That is why it's so critical that while you're working with your two, and even younger than that, we need to teach our one-year-olds what is okay and what isn't. I mean, they drop food in the high chair and it becomes a game to them because they're realizing, they're participating in a cause and effect and so it is a wonderful game and you don't want to be frustrated with that. Then, when they start throwing food, then you have to say no, that is not okay.

You have to have that firm voice, again, not harsh and not high pitched but firm so that the child understands that you mean business. No power struggles. Power struggles is when you argue endlessly with the child and now you're justifying your decision making, you don't justify your decisions of why you should – the child should do something or not do something. You just tell them.

You need to pick up your toys. It is time for bed, it is time to brush your teeth. You may not have a new toy in Walmart or the grocery store and so it's that no that means no because remember that also translates when you need to say no quickly because a child is about to dart into the street, that is a safety issue.

Or, if a child is picking up something or getting close to a fireplace or picking up a sharp object. That no has to be minded instantly. In a couple episodes a while back, I talked about giving a child the account of one. That is something that I used in my teaching, it's also something I used with my own children and it's something I use with my grandchildren and it's something that I highly recommend to you. When you give children to the count of three. It means they can be naughty and not mind you for the count of three.

[0:11:51.4] CW: That is not okay. They need to mind you when you say it. Again it's not because you're a bully or because you're trying to control every aspect of their life. It means that right now, I need you to stop, right now, I need you to give me attention. Right now I need you to listen.

For whatever follows that, you need to have that time where that child responds to you instantly because again, it could be a safety issue but it's also part of being a human being. Human beings need to grow up and listen to each other and not, like for instance, if someone comes to me with a question.

I might finish my thought if I'm typing or I'm writing or creating or I'm on the phone, whatever. That's kind of one thing I'm not even talking about that. But you want to also give someone's attention to them immediately because that's the human face-to-face relationships that we have with each other is looking someone in the eye and talking.

Well, that's really important so that humanity, that human heart to human heart. That is really important. Having that quick eye contact and quick response is really important. It's also developing relationships also. If a child feels that they can keep playing when you say it's time for bed, well, that's not okay.

[0:13:17.7] CW: That's really what I'm talking about here and it has helped me as the adult maintain my role in that child's life as far as helping them to grow to be the best they can be. Another area that is critical and I have seen teachers and parents forget this. Sometimes we're so tired, whether we're again, teachers or parents, we're so tired. Just getting through work or getting through our day, that we lose the fun of being with the child.

We're more exhausted than we are sometimes loving and patient. I think it's so important to again, have that wonderful relationship with that child so that you do have the time for smiles and laughing and joking around and kidding and wrestling or snuggling or reading a book or doing whatever we're doing.

Is that we're not spending all our time with frustrated and angry feelings. Either child, a parent, or parent or child or a teacher. That we're having these wonderful experiences and I think sometimes, we're so exhausted that we don't even have a few minutes of where we're just enjoying the child.

That is something really that we need to think about, we need to analyze our day and say how can we get the joy back? When we had that baby and caring that baby and playing with that brand new baby. I mean, we have such high hopes for that and as they get older, you know, it becomes a little bit harder, especially when children are going through the independent stages which sometimes we call the terrible two's which I really don't believe in. I believe that they're magnificent twos and sometimes it starts at when I have them.

Sometimes it doesn't start till three but that's where the child discovers that who he or she is. Sometimes, it requires the child to say no or to assert themselves and that's where the adult has to come in and say not okay. Even at that young age, they're the children at, in the one-year-old stage and the two-year-old and three, they're really discovering their own power, their own independence.

[0:15:32.7] CW: It has to be a real give and take there and you want to make sure that you're picking your battles, that's really important is that you can't say no to everything. You can't discourage a child's – way of doing things, they need to have that exploration time and again, you're there for safety and you're there to make sure that the child's being unselfish and minding but beyond that, you really want the child to explore and practice certain behaviors because that is who they find out who they are and so that is really, really important. When we want strong children who can be wonderful citizens of their family, their world, their school, their community, as they get older and older their sphere of influence becomes larger especially as they get their education. It has to start early in the home with them becoming mindful, minding and positive children and it start early.

We want to simplify things with young children using large vocabulary that they don't understand can be real confusing to them so and remember they are gaining their vocabulary, they're learning. So we as adults sometimes think that children understand our large words when really they don't, which means maybe every fourth word they really don't know what it means. So be very, very careful on your word choices. I don't mean talking down to children.

I love using large vocabulary words but I make sure that when I am using large vocabulary words with children, I am teaching them at the same time especially if we're discovering literature, science or math or whatever it is that I want to say it over and over again in many ways and I want to show them what it means but you are talking to child and you trying to change their behavior, you want to make sure that you are understanding your words.

You want to be clear and concise. You want to make it simple. You don't want to make too many words and so their ears close and that is another thing adults do. They talk and talk endlessly and as their energy and their inertia is moving forward as they are disciplining the child whether they are in the home or classroom, too many words and the child just literary turns off the ears. It is like too much to handle and so I am no longer listening to you.

[0:17:58.4] Well, that is not good. So make things simple. Give children choices, don't give them so many. You don't want to give them ultimate freedom for one thing. For instance, bedtime or games or what things to pull out of their drawers or their cubbies or in their rooms, in the toy box because then you have a mess. Too many choices for food, keep it easy. Give them

two choices I would say, definitely one. I mean we can put dinner on the table and that is perfectly fine.

But give children choices so that they have a feeling of empowerment so that they may not want to play with one toy but they certainly might want to play with another. So by giving them a couple of choices even up to three is okay. This reduces confusion and it also reduces anxiety. It is interesting to know that sometimes we think that the child is just being naughty when really they are either letting you know that they are confused or they have anxiety.

They are nervous. They are feeling uncomfortable or something. They are not able to sort out how they feel and remember, these children are so little. They were in the womb a couple of years ago and so we want to make sure that we are reducing anxiety by not just giving them too much to handle. I think sometimes this is where the adult comes in and sets the parameters and means what they say and say what they mean. That is really important for the child because it sets parameters clearly.

And it sets the consequences clearly for behavior as well as choices and it just gives them a safety net. I feel like that is really important. I had said earlier that children and even including teenagers they want their parents to say no because that lets them know that the parent is in charge and whether a child, a teenager is feeling like I want to do things my way, well they know that they really can't and they really know that they shouldn't.

[0:20:02.3] They really do want a parent to step in and set the parameters because it makes them feel safe. So do remember that when you are going through that with your children. Disruptive behavior in the classroom can make teaching so important. I don't mean important, I certainly don't mean important. It can make it seem so disruptive and uncomfortable and exhausting. Exhausting for everybody. If you are teaching children in the classroom and one child is taking up all the airspace.

Because of poor behavior, it is not okay to the rest of the children on the classroom and it certainly is not fair to you. You want to impart knowledge, you want to play with your kids. You want to have a good time with your children as your teaching and when one child has to be or a couple have to be talked to constantly, it really wears everyone down and it also cheats the other children in the classroom from having fun or getting an education.

So that has to be really analyzed carefully, same thing in the home. If one child is taking up all the attention because children, siblings are different with different personalities. You may have one child who just definitely takes up the time and you have to think about other members of the family. You have to think about yourself. The adults in the family deserve to have a break not to have to 100% constantly meet the needs of the children.

Children have to learn how to wait. They have to learn how to be unselfish. They have to learn how to let someone else have a turn or have a choice and that is incredibly important because again, your goal, your eyes on the prize of what that person's going to be when they are now 21 and 30 and onwards how are they handling their job raising their own family, living in a community, working within the community. You want them to be productive and positive citizens.

[0:21:58.2] And so again it starts early, it starts in the home. Children need to feel very, very secure. They also need to know that there are consistent bottom lines. That is where I keep talking about consequences. If you set a consequence, you cannot allow that child to literally go against what you have just said because that happens too often in the home and in the classroom. You'll say, "Don't do that. Stop that" and then you'll say, "Stop that" again.

And then you'll say it for a third time because the child isn't stopping. Well the child doesn't feel like you don't have any teeth in there that there is no bite, there is no consequence because you are not going to follow through and if you believe that from that point on they are never going to trust you to stop the behavior in an appropriate way and I underlined the word appropriate that doesn't mean spanking, that doesn't mean hitting, it doesn't mean demeaning or harshly punishing.

But in an appropriate way is when you have to lay down the parameter but you have to stick with it, "If you do not stop temper tantruming then we are not going to have story time tonight" or we are not going to – there is not going to be any time playing on your iPad or you are not going to have time playing outside or whatever your parameter is, you have to set it, establish it, the child has to understand it and you have to actually do it.

You have to come forward with it. I want to mention something that parents forgive me but it is something that we have seen over the years at Safari Learning and I certainly have seen it when we were teaching in my classroom is that we would have a hard day with a child and it would be exhausting with that particular child and we're talking it could be five, six hours with that child of misbehavior often throughout the hours.

[0:23:48.9] And so we will come to the door for example when you are picking your child up and we will tell you the day that the child had and then often the parent will pick up the child, kiss and hug and say, "How are you? How is your day" blah-blah-blah, get in the car, "Let's go get ice cream, let us go home and play" and it's like, "No wait a minute, that child has not been the best he or she could be" that child has been disruptive all day and you the parent have to say:

"Your behavior has not been acceptable. I am very, very disappointed" and you have to let them know that, "No, night time is not going to be fun. We are not going to go home and have ice cream or treats or read stories and do the happy fun things" because remember, that child is coming back to that preschool the next day and if you treat everything like it is not important, what happens in the school then that child is going to continue because again they are going to feel like you're not in charge.

And then also is going to show that you can play the child can play the teacher against the parent and vice-versa. So again that is something to really think about. It is so important and so important that teachers and parents and teachers and grandparents a lot of times will ask the grandparents to come in and sit with the parents and we talk and we meet because so often the grandparents are also baffled on how to stop inappropriate behavior.

And so we will sit together and we will come up with a game plan and then we would call the child in and we will include the child in that because we are a team. So that is really, really critical and really important. Making things simple so that children can understand fully what you are saying is basically us spelling it out. If you're having those issues, it is not too late. I have told so many parents and grandparents and teachers you can start over.

[0:25:47.5] But what you have to do is you have to say, "You know what? I have been making mistakes as a parent" or grandparent or teacher. "I have allowed you to become the boss and you are not the boss and so you know what we're going to do? We're going to start over. I am

the one that's older. I am the one with the life experience and I am the one paying the bills. I am the one protecting you. I am the one caring for you. So therefore, you need to mind me, you need to listen to what I am saying and you need to do what I am asking you to do."

And so now we have to verbalize with them carefully using the words that they can understand and you have to have that again modulated voice but don't try to change too many behaviors in young children. If you have a chronic problem chose the thing that is the most difficult, the most challenging for you and your child and talk about that. You can do a couple of behaviors but I learned really early in my special class and if I try to change too many behaviors at one time, it was too much for the child.

So choosing one or two things that you want, behaviors that you want to change, that makes it really clear for the child and help them to understand. Make sure that they repeat things back to you and when children are just learning language sometimes you just have to express yourself, say what is okay like "it is not okay to bite" and say it often. "It is not okay to bite, it hurts, you made your sister sad you hurt her" or your friend in class, "You hurt your friend."

"You may not take away that toy that is not okay" and so you make your words very clear but as children are getting older when they are becoming three, four and they are able to form sentences, make sure they are saying it back to you so you know that they know. They need part – you are putting them in the driver seat when you are asking them to say, "No it is not okay to take a toy away from a friend" or a sibling.

[0:27:50.3] Your brother or your sister, your cousin, whoever it is, and so now you are going to say why it's not. It is important to explain how does that make that person feel and then you are going to say, "You tell me how do we need to act" and so the child needs to say, "It is not okay to take a toy away from a friend" or my sister or my brother and make it really clear. You want to make a plan, a positive plan. You want to make sure that the child can verbalize.

That they are going to try harder and be very specific, "I am going to try not to take toys away from my friend or my sibling" and make it clear. "I am going to do my best I promise and I might make a mistake but I am going to try again" so we have to realize that our children, just like ourselves, we're fallible. We make mistakes and we're going to make a mistake but it is okay. We are going to try again and you know what is really important?

It is just to say to that child all is forgiven. I had a grandson and a granddaughter the other day that dropped the entire milkshake on my new carpet in my new house. I was not happy but they were horrified. First of all, they were disappointed that their milkshake was gone that they were sharing but they were also, they knew that I was not happy, but I didn't yell, but I did let them know that I was disappointed and that care needed to be taken.

And this was not the appropriate place to bring food in. On the other hand, I had to look at their faces because they were a bit horror struck and just to say, "It is forgivable. I love you, it's okay. We're going to clean it up" and I had them help me. In fact, I didn't even have to ask my grandson. He went in there, got a towel and cleaned up the greater mess himself while I was looking for things to clean up, he went and did it and I was so proud of him.

[0:29:45.4] And then I got the soap and the water and did the scrubbing and also just to give hugs and let them know we are going to start again. We are going to start all over and making it easy for a child so that they do know how to change that behavior and how to start again. Make sure that you are talking. If there is some misstep and they made a mistake then we forgive, we hug, we love and then we verbalize again how can we do this better and what can we do.

I think a lot of times it is just talking with the child, using simple words, setting those parameters, making them feel good about the experience that this is part of growth and that as they get bigger and older that they need to have this self-control and so this is really a wonderful experience. You know being a teacher is one of the most joyful experiences that I have ever had. I am so grateful I had that profession but being a parent and being a grandparent, it's just such a joy.

And yes, sometimes your last nerve is being stepped on but it has been wonderful and you can even make it more wonderful by trying some of these suggestion that I have given to you. If you have any questions, you know that you can call us. Call us at Zoo-phonics and look us up on the website. Call us at Safari Learning. We are all here to help you.

[END OF DISCUSSION]

[0:31:10.9] ANNOUNCER: That was Ed Talks with Dr. Char. You've been listening on KAAD-LP Radio live on 103.5 FM or streaming online at kaad-lp.org. If you would like to have Dr. Char answer any of your questions, please email your question to dr_char@zoo-phonics.com.

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