

Parent Project, Jr.

# Loving Solutions

A Parent's Guide to Raising  
Tough Kids, ages 5-10 years



**Ralph "Bud" Fry**  
**Dr. Roger H. Morgan**



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Tough Kids, ages 5-10 years



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Dr. Roger H. Morgan

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# Parent Project,<sup>®</sup> Inc.

**Our mission** is to develop parent training programs for parents raising difficult or out-of-control children, ages 5 and up. We provide highly effective programs that are affordable for every parent. Now in our 27th year, Parent Project<sup>®</sup> classes have helped in excess of 500,000 families.

**Parent Project, Sr.** is a comprehensive, award winning model for community-based programs serving families with strong-willed or out-of-control adolescent children. At the heart of Parent Project, Sr., is Changing Destructive Adolescent Behavior. This curriculum is the only program of its kind in the United States in that it focuses on the most destructive of adolescent behaviors.

- **My child refuses to go to school. What do I do?**
- **What do you do when your child beats you up?**
- **What can I do about my son's gang involvement?**
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Parent Project, Sr. offers concrete, step-by-step solutions for parents raising adolescent children in today's complex society. A built-in parent support group offers parents both emotional and practical support as they make necessary changes at home.

Information regarding Parent Project<sup>®</sup> classes can be found at: [www.parentproject.com](http://www.parentproject.com), or by calling Parent Project<sup>®</sup>, Inc. at 800-372-8886.

# Introduction

Shirley Becker rushes into the grocery store with her two young children in tow. Bobby is 5 and Martha is 3. It is obvious to anyone watching that their mother is in a hurry. She grabs a shopping cart and picks up her daughter, placing her in the child's seat of the cart. Bobby begins to whine. He too wants to ride in the shopping cart. With some effort, Shirley picks up her son and puts him in the cart as well. She explains to Bobby that he may ride in the cart until it becomes too full with groceries. The boy agrees and mom pushes the cart down the first aisle.

Within 15 minutes, the cart is too full to accommodate both her son and the groceries. Shirley tells her son that it is time to get out of the cart. Just as she begins to lift him up, he screams "No!" and squirms out of her hands. He grabs onto the cart, wedges his feet against the sides and refuses to budge. Mom patiently explains to her 5 year old that the cart is now too full. She reminds Bobby that he agreed with her that he would get out of the cart when it was time. Mom talks to her son for some time. Nevertheless, Bobby refuses to move. Frustrated, running out of time, and not nearly finished with her shopping, mom lifts Bobby out of the cart and stands him on his feet. Bobby throws himself on the floor; and starts a screaming temper tantrum the likes of which even his mother has never seen.

Shortly, the scene draws a large crowd of shoppers. Some look on in horror, some with disgust, others begin to laugh. A few of the shoppers, however, (probably parents who have raised difficult children themselves), share a look of sympathy with Bobby's mother, who is now beginning to cry.

If this scene sounds familiar, you're holding the right book. Loving Solutions was specifically designed for parents raising difficult, strong-willed, or highly impulsive children. With special application to ADD/ADHD issues, our hope is that Loving Solutions will help make raising your children much easier and more enjoyable.

There is one last thing. The answers you learn in this class mean **nothing**. It is what we actually **do** at home that will bring about change. In each Unit you will learn new techniques to deal with your strong-willed or difficult child. At the end of each class you will be given the opportunity to practice your new skills at home. We call these *Steps of Success*. If you faithfully take your weekly *Steps*, we promise you will see positive changes at home.

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# Meet Max & Jenni!

They've agreed to help us better understand our own children.



What's up? I'm Max!

I'm 10 years old, and I like to play soccer and run with my dog Buddy. Pizza is my favorite food, especially with pineapple on top!

I love my mom a lot, but sometimes I get really angry when she asks me to do stuff when I'm in the middle of playing my favorite video game. Mom says I'm too impulsive. I think parents should come with instructions.

Hey There! I'm Jenni.

I'm 8 years old, and my favorite color is pink. I really enjoy learning all about fashion, and like to put together all kinds of crazy outfits. Mom says my room is really messy, but I know where everything is.

My biggest problem is my little brother and sister. They can be a real pain. Mom says I need to be nicer to them. I'm working on it, but sometimes they make me really mad. Mom says I need to work on my temper. Whatever!



## Professor Laney

We can't work the kids too hard . . . they're only 8 and 10! When Max and Jenni are unavailable, I'll fill in. I will help with some of the group activities and share some interesting quotes and ideas from other parents and parenting experts.



Finally, meet the dads who wrote this book. Together, Dr. Roger Morgan and Ralph “Bud” Fry have over 50 years of experience writing parenting books, teaching parenting classes and training other parent educators. Their specialty is working with parents of strong-willed, difficult or highly impulsive children. Bud and Roger are the cofounders of the Parent Project®, a national organization dedicated to helping families. You can read more about the authors at [www.parentproject.com](http://www.parentproject.com) if you like, but for now, let's get started.

### Roger



### Bud



# Unit 1: Parenting the Strong-willed Child: *Laying the Foundation*





# Objectives:

Parents will be able to:

- List character traits of a strong-willed child
- Recognize successful ways to demonstrate love and affection
- Discuss the limits of communication
- Describe effective parenting strategies to increase cooperation and other positive behaviors.

## Before We Begin Unit 1:

Choose someone you do not know to be your partner. Ask each other the following questions. Please write or draw your partner's answers.

1. What is your partner's name? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the names and ages of your partner's children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What type of parenting concerns or issues is your partner facing right now? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What does your partner hope to learn from this class? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

After getting your partner's permission, introduce your *new friend* to the large group using the above information.

# Strong-willed vs. Compliant Children

Parents with compliant children usually do not understand what all the fuss is about, while parents of strong-willed, or impulsive children usually end up questioning their ability to parent effectively. For parents of impulsive children, simple parental requests are often met with loud complaints or open refusals to cooperate. Sometimes it is simply the personality (strong will) of the child that makes parenting more difficult. In other cases, learning disabilities or other problematic conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), present additional, unique challenges to parents. Whatever the reason, traditional parenting techniques are generally less effective with the strong-willed or impulsive child.

Many parents thought (before they had children) that all children were cuddly, responsive, cooperative and compliant. The thought was that good parenting will always result in a happy, well-adjusted child. When our child does not display these gentle characteristics, we often blame ourselves; we feel guilty. The fact is that our child's nature is probably an inherited trait and is not the result of parenting. So what did we do to have a strong-willed child? You had sex! If you have an adopted child, somebody else had sex. Most experts today agree that a child's personality is most likely determined in the womb. Unfortunately, some parents become paralyzed from action because of self blame, thinking their child's difficult nature is a result of their parenting. We suggest parents focus instead on what they can do to help their children.

## Individual Activity 1.1: Personality

“They tell me I can be difficult and I argue a lot. That's not true!”

Working by yourself or with your spouse, choose the five words/phrases below that best describe your child's personality. Please circle your answers.

- |                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Calm              | 6. Emotional     |
| 2. Easygoing         | 7. Strong-willed |
| 3. Willing to listen | 8. Argumentative |
| 4. Understanding     | 9. Stubborn      |
| 5. Compliant         | 10. Challenging  |



If three or more of your answers are in the column on the right, chances are you have a strong-willed or impulsive child.

Most parents show love to their children, praise them when they are good, and provide discipline when necessary. This is effective with most children. We refer to these methods as traditional parenting techniques. For the more difficult or impulsive child, **traditional** parenting techniques are less effective. Just as an auto mechanic would not use metric tools designed for foreign cars on American cars, parents should not expect the parenting tools created for more compliant children to work with strong-willed, more difficult children. Parents with ‘**metric**’ children need a new set of tools.

This can be especially confusing for parents with several children. Your first two children are generally compliant, cooperative, and seldom cause trouble. Your third child comes out of the womb kicking, screaming and unhappy about everything. As this little one grows, you use every trick you know from your experiences with the first two children, to guide this new child. Nothing seems to work. Parents often question what they have done wrong, and miss the fact that this is a different type of child, requiring a different set of parenting tools.

## So what does work?

**Love and Affection, Positive Strokes, Positive Consequences and Negative Consequences** (discussed in Unit 2) are the keys to parenting impulsive children. This is the foundation we will use and the foundation from which we will build. We will discuss the use of these keys, not only with strong-willed children but with special needs children as well.

In a national poll, participants were asked, “What phrase or words do you long to hear?” The number one answer, “I love you!” The second most popular response was, “You are forgiven.” The third answer surprised most readers; it was, “Supper is ready.” If we think about it, these phrases create a strong framework for parenting. Because love is the foundation for our relationship with our children, let’s begin with a parent’s expression of love and affection.

## Love and Affection

The three most powerful words in any language are, *I Love You*. When parents understand the importance of these three words, and take the time to use them daily, they will have mastered the single most important element of successful parenting.

Love and affection is the key to family communication and discipline. They also play a vital role in building a child’s self concept. Sadly, older children often involve themselves in highly destructive behaviors because they do not believe their parents love or even care about them. The bumper sticker: *Have you hugged your kid today?*, was originally developed as a campaign to help parents keep their children from using alcohol and other drugs.

When parents are asked if they love their children, the usual response is, "Of course I do." But, when asked, "When was the last time you told your son or daughter that you love them?" parents' responses are mixed.

Loving our child is not enough. Parents' love must be **expressed**. Many parents, especially fathers, find it difficult to tell those closest to them how they feel. Nevertheless, it is essential for children to know they're loved today for who they are and not only for what they do or for what they might become. Children are "now" focused. They seldom think of the future and usually do not remember parental messages from one day to the next. For these reasons, most experts agree, parents' love for their children should be communicated daily.

When parent/child relationships are strained, or with some special needs children, a parent's expression of love may not be openly acknowledged by the child. Nevertheless, love must be expressed daily. Hugs, kisses and pats on the back are great. They all help to show love and affection to a child; but, there is no replacement for a heartfelt, "I love you." These three words can work wonders and are irreplaceable in changing unwanted behavior and improving parent/child relationships.

## A Parent's Love

*Parents plea to the heavens,  
For some guiding light,  
To give them strength,  
And help them sleep at night.*

*Those prayers are answered,  
So that parents will know,  
That they are the guidance,  
To where their children go.*

*Parents guide with rules,  
With love and with hope,  
With strength and with courage,  
Which helps kids to cope.*

*Parents say to kids daily,  
Just how much they are loved,  
Even when kids are errant,  
And they've pushed or shoved.*

*Parents, don't sit in silence,  
Stand straight and proud,  
Tell your children you love them,  
Say it clear, say it loud.*

*For no matter their faults,  
Or the wrongs kids may do,  
Your love and affection,  
Will bring them closer to you.*

**"Love is a better teacher than duty." - Albert Einstein**



# Working In Groups

Most of the parenting techniques discussed in this book can be learned and practiced in a group format. Therefore, before we begin our first group activity, it will be necessary to divide into groups of about four to six members each. Working in a group allows each member to draw from the experiences of their entire group, and increases learning and understanding. Groups work best when each member is assigned to and performs one of the following *group roles*:

**Group Facilitator:** The group “taskmaster” keeps the group on task and ensures that their group follows through with the format of each activity.

**Group Recorder:** As group secretary, the recorder writes down the group responses/ answers during activities and reports their group’s answers to the large group at the end of each activity.

**Group Time Keeper:** The group time manager monitors the time allotment during all support group activities. While helping their group complete activities on time, this member helps pace the work and gives a one minute warning.

**Group Cheerleaders/Nurturers:** The group motivator(s) helps their group to focus on the positive and gives positive strokes to individual members. They promote each member’s participation, and discourage judgmental language and behavior. (More than one parent can be assigned to this important task.)

These group roles should be rotated among support group members on a weekly basis.



## Group Activity 1.2: Roles

Working with your group, take a minute to elect every member to one of the group roles below. Record the member’s name next to his/her assigned role.

**Group Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Recorder:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Time Keeper:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Nurturers/Cheerleaders:** \_\_\_\_\_



## The Point

Most parents tell us that group learning is extremely helpful. We know that groups work best when each parent actively participates in one of these group roles.

# Successful Groups

Let's examine a few *ground rules* for working in groups:

**Active Listening:** Only one group member speaks at a time. When someone is speaking, the remaining group members should give their complete and undivided attention to that member.

**Confidentiality:** Trust between group members is the foundation for group success. In order to develop trust, people must feel sure of confidentiality. Confidentiality is generally interpreted as, *What is heard in the group, remains in the group.*

**Avoid Being Judgmental:** Each group should be a safe, comfortable and positive place to share your feelings and stories. Groups are not a place for judgment, criticism or confrontation. Activities require the brain power of the entire group to be successful. Judgmental responses often shut down the creative process and should be avoided.

When working with your group on *Brainstorming Activities*, the following additional norms should be included:

**Quantity vs. Quality:** There are no right or wrong answers in brainstorming activities. Members should contribute to the group whatever ideas come to mind. Be as creative as possible; don't worry about the merit or strength of the idea.

**Okay to Piggy Back:** When a member can add to another member's idea, they should do so.

**Group Ownership:** Once an idea or thought has been spoken aloud, it belongs to the group.

“They tell me you will learn more stuff if you work in groups.  
I don't know about that. I just think it will be more fun.”



# Love and Affection: (continued)



## Group Activity 1.3: Showing Love



“I may not always say it back. I may even turn away when you say it. I still need to hear how much you love me, everyday.”

Working with your group, take a few minutes to list or draw examples of ways parents can convey love and affection to their children. Remember to follow the ground rules for working in groups.

1. Saying, “I Love You”.
2. Cooking for your children.
3. Spending time with your children.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



## The Point

There are probably hundreds of ways parents express their love and affection to their children on a daily basis. Some ways are more effective than others. Just getting out of bed and going to work for the family can be an expression of love. *But, what do our children recognize as love?* Some items on our lists are expected by children and seen by them as our duty, not our love. We must use expressions that cannot be interpreted by our children as anything other than, *Mom and Dad love me.*

One parent said that when he buys something special for his son, the child recognizes the gift as an expression of love. Another child may see the same gift as his right: *Dad’s job is to buy me stuff!* Based on this concept, parents must deliver effective messages of love. Again, children must be able to clearly hear the message, *Mom and Dad love me.*



## Group Activity 1.4: Most Effective

“I don’t always get it. You need to tell me so I will understand.”

Working with your group, list three parental expressions of love that I cannot mistake as anything other than love. (Usually, there will only be three.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



## The Point

These three expressions of love will be recognized by every child. Remember, when parents are frustrated, the words *I Love You* are spoken less and less. For the parents who are able to put their frustration aside long enough for a heartfelt *I Love You* at bedtime, change will be less painful. Without open displays of love and affection, discipline, structure, communication and the family itself will suffer greatly.

## Positive Strokes

“I can live for two months on a good compliment.” - Mark Twain

Parents should recognize or give **positive strokes** to their children when they catch them doing something right.



Example: A parent sees his/her child reading a book instead of playing video games. A parent who wanted to increase the time the child spent reading might say, "It makes me smile to see you reading." This type of recognition or positive stroke increases the chance the child will read again in the near future.

A parent asked, "Why should I give my child a positive stroke for doing something he is supposed to do?" We could only think of one answer: Because you want your child to do it again. Even adults that are paid to do a job are occasionally given a positive stroke by their supervisor for doing a good job. The same principle applies in parenting.



## Group Activity 1.5: Doing Right

"You need to tell me when I do good. If you do, I'll do it again."



Working with your group, take a few minutes to list or draw some behaviors for which a child should be given a positive stroke by his parent.

1. Taking out the trash with or without being asked.
2. Helping a younger brother or sister.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



## The Point

It is easier to increase wanted behaviors than it is to decrease unwanted behaviors. The more positive strokes we give our children, the more our children will cooperate with those positive behaviors. Giving positive strokes to our children also addresses the often repeated complaint we hear from children about their parents: *My parents always tell me when I mess up. They never tell me when I do good.*

## The Limits of Communication

A father, driving with his family, said to his ten year old in the back seat, “Hey Mike, want to roll up your window?” A few minutes later his son still had not rolled up his window. He repeated his question, which was intended to be more of a directive; “Hey Mike, didn’t you hear me? You want to roll up the window?” A bright child, Mike answered, “You didn’t tell me to roll up the window, you asked me if I wanted to roll up the window. I didn’t want to, so I didn’t.” Our children usually know exactly what we are saying. When they do not comply, it is usually because they do not want to, not because they did not hear or understand us.

Any video game addicts in your family? “Johnny, turn off your game, wash your hands and come to dinner.” Five minutes later, when every other member of the family has been seated and is anxiously waiting to eat, Mom says in a somewhat more aggravated tone, “Johnny, didn’t you hear me? I said to come to dinner!” Johnny replies in an equally aggravated tone, “I heard you...but I can’t stop now, I’m almost to the next level!”

We prefer to believe that Johnny did not hear us, rather than recognize he is very good at ignoring us. Most of the problems we have with our children are reruns of the same conflicts we had last week, and the week before, and the week before... What is it that makes us think that repeating the request the 1,765th time will finally get through, when the first 1,764 times did not? Are children suddenly going to “hear” us? Let’s face it, children do not want to do their chores, homework, wash their hands, brush their teeth, clean their rooms, or scoop the dog poop (even though they promised they would when you agreed to get them that dog).

So why do we keep asking them again and again, as if somehow that 1,765th time just might be the magic number? Are we playing the Lottery here? What will bring us the jackpot? In fact, nothing, if we keep using communication only.

Sigmund Freud, the famous psychiatrist once said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, yet expecting different results.” Are we all insane? No, we are not all crazy. But most parents have placed far too much faith in communication. Let us be clear here. Communication is not a bad thing. We should communicate with our children. In fact, it is extremely important to communicate, and to communicate well. However, *after* communication has failed, we need to move on to the next step rather than persist past the point of ridiculousness by repeating ourselves over and over again. Saying it louder the second, third and fourth time is not the answer. The result of nagging leads to frustration, anger, hurt feelings, tension, damaged self-esteem, and strained parent/child relationships. Our advice here is simple, **STOP REPEATING YOURSELF!**

“What did you say?”

We said, stop repeating yourself.

“What?”

Go to your room!



If words had worked, would you be taking this class? If words worked, your child would have turned off the video game and come to dinner. If words worked, they would have studied for that test, even without you asking, because they listened to you when you told them that was the way to graduate, and someday get that good job. On a more serious note, if words worked, our kids would not join gangs, take drugs, drink alcohol, become sexually active at fourteen or die prematurely from the dangerous choices they have made against our 'words.' Indeed, if only words worked. When our words don't work, it is time to move to something else. That something else is a consequence that goes beyond words.

## Positive Consequences

The MOST powerful way to increase desired behavior comes from **positive consequences**, such as giving children access to the things or activities they want after they have followed a parent's request or rule.

*Example:* A parent returns home and finds his/her child watching television. Knowing the child has unfinished homework, the parent instructs the child to turn off the TV. The parent explains, *Honey, you may absolutely turn on the TV just as soon as you finish your homework and I have checked and approved it.*

In this case, the **positive consequence** for the child is watching television after his homework is completed.

This is not a bribe. When we bribe a person, we give them the money before they do the job. **Positive consequences** is the same concept as receiving a pay check at the end of the work week. The message we want to send to our kids is that we work before we play.

**"I hate to see my children suffer, but loving them means doing what is best for them, not what hurts the least."**

**- Patti Covert**





## Group Activity 1.6: Fun Follows Work

“Okay. I’m not gonna like it at first. But I need to learn to work before I play.”

Working with your group, take a few minutes to develop a list of situations parents should create at home to allow their child to experience positive consequences. Make sure that every situation contains a specific desired behavior and identifies a positive consequence. Using the word “absolutely,” or, “sure,” helps to focus kids on the positive and significantly reduces parent / child arguments.



1. *Absolutely!* You may watch TV, just as soon as you finish drying the dishes.
2. *Sure!* You may go to your friend’s house, just as soon as your room is clean.
3. *Absolutely!* You may \_\_\_\_\_, just as soon as \_\_\_\_\_.
4. *Sure!* You may \_\_\_\_\_, just as soon as \_\_\_\_\_.
5. *Absolutely!* You may \_\_\_\_\_, just as soon as \_\_\_\_\_.



## The Point

When parents use both positive strokes and positive consequences often, it tends both to increase children’s positive behaviors and to help children feel better about themselves. Using the words “absolutely” or “sure”, works like a *miracle*, in reducing the arguments.

## Parents Control Things, Not Children

In Unit 2, Parental Influence, we will discuss influence vs. control in more depth. In this Unit, we will simply want to say parents cannot control their children, but parents can control the things their children enjoy such as bicycles and video games. While children may not be willing to work for the things we want, they will usually work for the things they want. By controlling the things children want, parents can motivate children to do constructive tasks and teach self discipline as well. By using the things that children want, we can influence behavior. So what are the things children enjoy?



## Group Activity 1.7: Child's List

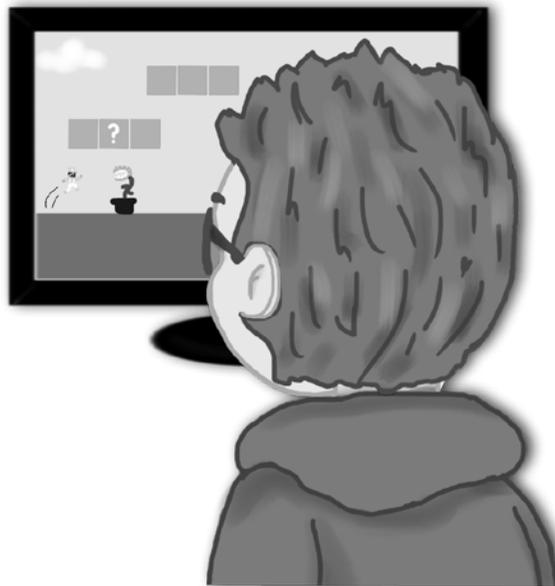
Working with your group, take a few minutes to list the daily activities/things your child enjoys. Take your time. Make sure your list includes everything your child enjoys (video games, bicycles, etc.)

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 12. _____ |



## The Point

These are the items children cannot have access to while on Time-Out. When we refer to our “Child’s List of Things”, or, “Child’s List” throughout this book, this is what we mean.



## When to Use Self-Limiting Time-Outs

There are two basic types of Time-Out: Self-Limiting Time-Outs (“take as much time as you need”) and Fixed Time-Outs (parents set the time). A Self-Limiting Time-Out is used when a child has chosen not to do or complete a task. They have not done something bad, as much as failed to do something they do not wish to do, typically some chore or responsibility. We will discuss how to respond to inappropriate behavior such as breaking rules, hitting, and being disrespectful in Unit 2.

When a child refuses to do homework for example, one simple solution is to not allow the child access to any of the things on their list, until their homework is complete. We call this a Self-Limiting Time-Out. Self-Limiting Time-Outs involve withholding our Children’s List of Things in order to motivate children to do the tasks they would not do on their own. These are activities that children are not motivated from within to do. Motivators (Child’s List of Things) are withheld only until the child completes the task. Kids learn when they see the connection: *I get to do the things I like as soon as I do the jobs mom and dad want me to do.* From this, children gain a critical life skill - self discipline. Although we may never be able to convince our children of this, basic structure, including the use of Self-Limiting Time-Outs are not punishment. They are simply methods of helping our children use their time wisely, to develop and to become stronger, more capable adults.



### Group Activity 1.8: Unfun Tasks

“Most of the time, the only way I’m gonna do the stuff I don’t like, is if you take away the stuff I do like.”

Working with your group, take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of situations where a parent should use a Self-Limiting Time-Out.

1. Child needs to complete homework.
2. Child needs to pick up his toys.
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



**The Point** Children must learn to motivate themselves to perform important tasks that are not fun. Using Self-Limiting Time-Outs significantly reduces parent/child conflict and helps children learn self discipline (motivating themselves to do something positive that they do not wish to do). Therefore, ask your children once, two times if you must, but when we repeatedly ask our children to do something, we unintentionally teach children that they do not have to listen their parent’s requests.

## Designing Self-Limiting Time-Outs

Self-Limiting Time-Outs motivate children to do what they may find unpleasant or boring (homework, chores, etc.). A child who refuses to pick up his toys, is simply sent to a Time-Out until he is ready to pick up the toys. He may leave Time-Out *only* to pick up the toys. In the beginning, parents should remind their child that he may not leave for glasses of water, to answer the front door or telephone, or for any other activity. Note: while bathroom visits should initially be allowed, parents should be prepared for some children to attempt to take advantage of this request. Parents should postpone offers of hugs and kisses until tasks are completed. The child need not ask permission to leave Time-Out to pick up his toys. When he chooses to pick up his toys, he simply leaves and does it, thereby, ending his own Time-Out. He can play immediately afterwards (Child's List).

Example: A child is reminded by his parent to make his bed. Later, the parent sees the child playing in the room with no progress on the bed. The parent sends the child to a suitable Time-Out spot (nothing fun to do, watch or listen to) and respectfully repeats the request to make the bed, adding the statement, *take as much time as you need*. The parent withholds all of the Child's List until the bed is made. When the child finishes the bed and tells his parent, the parent either approves, provides additional training, or if the child is capable of doing better, he is asked to redo or finish it. If the child whines or complains, calmly remind him that he must complete the task. Don't argue!

Instead of arguing, again add the statement, *take as much time as you need*. If your child refuses, again respectfully remind him that he is to return to Time-Out until he is ready to make his bed.



## Summary of the keys to effective Self-Limiting Time-Outs

1. Are used to help motivate children to complete important tasks.
2. The length of the *Time-Out* is determined only by the child.
3. They are open-ended: child might spend three seconds, ten minutes, a half hour, or even longer on a *Self-Limiting Time-Out* before he chooses to do the task.
4. All reinforcers (Child's List of Things) are withheld until the desired positive behavior is finished. *Time-Outs* are often most effective when children stand facing a blank wall, without pictures or other items to fidget with. Hallway walls or corners usually work well.
5. The child is instructed that they may leave *Time-Out* at whatever point he decides to complete the requested task.
6. The child tells his parent(s) when he believes the task is complete.
7. The parent checks on the quality of their child's effort.
  - a) Effort **is** approved and the child is free for normal, chosen activities. **Positive strokes** should be given as soon as the task is complete.
  - b) Effort **is not** approved, the child chooses either to complete the task or return to *Time-Out* until they are ready to do so.
  - c) Do not demand perfection. We are talking about 5 to 10 year-old children here. Keep your child's capabilities in mind when you ask them to complete tasks.
8. Parents should not speak to a child while they are on *Time-Out*. It is tempting to repeat our instructions in the hope that the child did not understand us the first time. In most cases it is not that our child did not understand us. It is more likely that they just don't want to do it. Siblings should also be told to not speak to a child on *Time-Out*.

Allowing children to *take as much time as they need* or choose to complete a chore, (while withholding all of *Their List* until they do) is very effective in transferring responsibility to our children. The statement *take as much time as you need* is powerful, and helps children understand that their behavior determines when they may have the things on *Their List*. The *Child's List* of things is available *only after* the chore is completed. The child is in control of when he gets the things on *his list*. The child is learning an essential life skill; we work before we play.

**“The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary.”**

**- Vince Lombardi**



*Note: We recognize that some strong-willed/impulsive children may simply refuse to take Time-Outs. Others may respond by kicking or hitting their parents. We will discuss these and other out-of-control behaviors in Unit 7.*

Learning self discipline is one of the most critical tasks of childhood. When learned early, self discipline reduces family and peer conflict, contributes significantly to personal success, and saves lifelong heartache. Unfortunately, as children get older, both the negative consequences for failure to control one's self become far more serious (addiction to drugs, legal problems, physical injury or even death from gang violence, etc.) and cooperative behavior becomes more difficult to teach and to learn.

Perhaps Harry J. Golden said it best:

**“The arrogance of the young is a direct result of not having known enough consequences. The turkey that every day greedily approaches the farmer who tosses him grain is not wrong. It is just that no one ever told the turkey about Thanksgiving.”**



Any single intervention discussed in this book, when used alone, is less effective in shaping behavior. The keys to successfully parenting the strong-willed or impulsive child are daily expressions of **Love and Affection**, consistent use of **Positive Strokes, Positive Consequences and Negative Consequences** (discussed in Unit 2).



## Review Activity 1.9: Key Points to Remember

Working with your support group, take a few minutes to complete the following statements by filling in the blanks using the words in **bold** print below. Feel free to use your books. Then, working by yourself, record the most powerful idea you learned from this unit.

1. If parents have a strong-willed child, traditional parenting techniques may not \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Parents must tell their children how much they are loved every \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Although parents cannot control their children, parents can control the \_\_\_\_\_ their children enjoy.
4. Parents should give their children *positive* \_\_\_\_\_ when they catch their children doing something right.
5. When children refuse to do a requested task, parents should use a \_\_\_\_\_ *Time-Out*.

**strokes      day      work      Self Limiting      things**

6. Finally, working by yourself, what was the most powerful idea you personally learned from this Unit? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note: Changing a child's behavior requires that we as parents change also. The weekly Steps of Success at the end of each unit help parents prepare for and bring about change in their home. Parents who faithfully complete each weekly S.O.S. are far more likely to see positive changes at home.

## Steps of Success - S.O.S.

*“The dads who wrote this book tell me that if my parents take their Steps of Success, every week, things will be a lot more peaceful at home. That would be a good thing; cause I’m really getting tired of my parents yelling at me.”*



- *Tell your children how much they are loved every day this week.*
- *Catch your children doing something right and give them a positive stroke.*
- *If at any time next week, you find that your words are not working, move to a Self-Limiting Time-Out.*
- *Make sure you bring back your success stories to share with your support group next week.*

How did your child react to your open displays of love and affection this past week?

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I gave my child a positive stroke when I “caught” him: \_\_\_\_\_

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I used a *Self-Limiting Time-Out* when: \_\_\_\_\_

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What happened? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Words of Wisdom

**“I wish I would have held you closer, hugged and kissed you more when you were little.” - Parent Author Unknown**