

Parenting Tip

Daughter does not “Measure Up.”

By John Rosemond

Q: My 5-year-old is the youngest of my 3 children. Her older boy/girl twin siblings clearly outshine her athletically. They're already very skilled at wakeboarding and snow skiing, for example. I think my youngest has decided that because she doesn't measure up to her siblings, she will simply give up. All she wants to do is hang out with me. (I'm not athletic either, but everyone in the family except this one child is physically active.) Furthermore, she is disrespectful to anyone who tries to interest her in trying something new. She ignores the person, acting as if they weren't even there. When I suggest activities, she becomes whiny and makes everyone miserable. I don't know where to begin to start with helping her but something has to change before we all go crazy!

A: You're obviously “psychologizing” your daughter's behavior and responding more to your interpretation than to what she is actually doing—actually, a common tendency in today's parent culture. From my ironically non-psychological perspective, the problem is not that because she can't keep up with her older siblings your daughter has “just decided to give up;” the problem is that she's often rude and disrespectful. She completely tunes out people who are talking to her, for example.

You think you need to “help” her. I think you need to discipline her. However unwittingly and with good intentions, you're making excuses for and therefore enabling her misbehavior.

Her rehabilitation begins with treating people with respect. I recommend that you put her on my celebrated “Three Strikes You're Out!” program. She receives a strike whenever she is disrespectful or whines. When she is disrespectful toward others or whines disruptively, she receives a strike. Each of the first two strikes of the day result in 15 minutes of time-out. The third strike of the day results in her spending the remainder of the day in her room and going to bed immediately after supper.

The second phase of her rehabilitation involves a change in your behavior. Stop “suggesting” activities to her. Find something you would like to do with her, and tell her, declaratively, “This is what I've decided you and I are doing today.” If she objects, tell her she has no choice in the matter. The activities in question should not involve her siblings and should not be things they already excel at. That will prevent unfavorable comparisons. I'm talking about mother-daughter things. Start slow. Take walks through parks or on nature trails, for example. Graduate from there to leisurely bike rides. The key is finding activities she can enjoy without having to compete.

By the way, there's an “odd duck” child in nearly every family. The challenge, always, is helping the child find a pond she feels comfortable swimming in.

Marriage Tip

No. 73

Saying "I Understand" To A Woman May Be Insulting Her

By John Gray

Women have heard men on countless occasions say, "I understand." With those two simple words, men think they are being supportive by indicating that they are listening and further that they are connecting with what she is feeling.

What men don't realize is that on Venus (for women), you cannot understand until you have heard it all.

A woman thinks a man is not listening when he presumes to understand what she is feeling.

What guys also don't get when they are saying that they understand is that it's very possible that they actually sound both dismissive and insulting. What "I understand" often sounds like is: "I got it already. You don't have to tell me any more. Please, can we move on?"

Unfortunately, even though his intentions may be good, the average guy has no idea how insulting, and yes, patronizing, the old "I understand" can actually sound.

In Martian speak by saying he understands how she feels he is saying that he is motivated to help in some way and has heard enough to suggest a solution.

What a Venusian hears is "I don't want to listen anymore. Let's either do something now, or please change the subject."

In fact, women have a much greater tolerance for emotional distress. With that higher threshold, before they ever feel that something has to be done or said, they can patiently listen to another woman's distress (or a man's for that matter) without feeling any urgency to do something or to fix anything.

A man hears a problem and he immediately wants to do something about it. For him, when she shares her feelings, he thinks she is just alerting him to the fact that there is a problem that he is supposed to solve. It simply doesn't occur to the average male that what she really wants is for him to simply listen patiently.

In this example, when women think that men are not listening, it is actually more accurate to conclude the following: that a man listened but incorrectly assumed that he knew all that she was feeling. Additionally, he is also assuming that she was seeking his suggestion about a solution (wanting him to "fix it"). Actually and more importantly she was hoping he would hear all of her feelings before sharing his point of view.

So what's a Martian to do? Well, instead of saying I understand, he can assure a woman that he is listening by nodding his head and occasionally making little sounds like, "Umhummm." On Venus, these small reassuring gestures mean, "I am listening and wanting to understand what you are saying."

On Mars men don't normally do this in conversation because it indicates his agreement and support of what is being said as opposed to simply taking in what he is hearing.

The differing styles of communicating on both Mars and Venus is an endless source of friction. The most important lesson for men here is to recognize that male and female communication patterns differ in a variety of ways. One of the most critical involves the art of listening.

Practice patience, men, and take the time to hear everything that is being said.

Spiritual Tip

Life is often noisy and full of distractions

By Joel Osteen

Concerns and problems flood our minds. There is always so much to do! But, God wants the very best for you but you just have to know how to recognize it and lay hold of it.

If you've ever said to yourself, "I don't even have time to think," then you know how hard it is to concentrate when you're being bombarded from all sides. It's even harder to focus on God when we can't take time to renew our minds and refresh our spirits by quiet reflection. God doesn't often shout to get our attention. Instead, He usually speaks to us in "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12, NKJV).

So, what can we do to put ourselves in a position to hear God's voice? We have to make time in our daily lives to get quiet. David said of the Lord in Psalm 23:2, "He leads me beside quiet waters." Today I want to encourage you to find those quiet waters where you can get alone with the Lord. It may be a room in your house, outside under the trees, or some other place where you can shut out the noise and distractions of the world for just a few precious minutes. The key to renewing your mind, body and spirit is to develop the habit and discipline of meditating on the Word of God every day — even if it is for just a moment.

The Bible is filled with the blessings and benefits of meditating

To meditate simply means to reflect on the same thing over and over again, visualize it and let the meaning of it sink deep down into your heart. Meditation is a spiritual practice that's encouraged throughout Scripture. The key is to draw on God's wisdom found in the Scriptures. In fact, the Bible is filled with the blessings and benefits of meditating on its principles. I have four of these benefits that I want to share with you today:

1. Meditating on God's Word will give you spiritual success.

God told Joshua, "Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed" (Joshua 1:8, NLT). God's definition of success in life is to know Him better. One way we do that is to read and understand His Word!

2. Meditating on God's Word will help you keep your heart right before Him.

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, NIV). We need to evaluate our thoughts, deeds and motives each day, confessing any wrong attitudes or actions (1 John 1:9). The Bible gives us clear direction on how to live. It is a mirror that accurately shows us where our hearts really are.

3. Meditating on God's Word will give you insights and wisdom that will guide you at every turn in your life.

"I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes" (Psalm 119:99, NIV). There is supernatural wisdom that comes from meditating on God's Word. It will strengthen you, guide you and give you hope and victory in every situation!

4. Meditating on Scripture will help you fill your mind with the things of God.

"Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about" (Philippians 4:8, TLB). Since we can only think about one thing at a time, meditating on God's love and goodness leaves no room for wrong thinking.

The benefits of meditating on Scripture influence YOUR WHOLE DAY

There are incredible riches available when we invest in our relationship with God by spending time in His life-giving Word. We have God's promise that, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11, NKJV). This Scripture tells us that the Lord has good things waiting for you, but you have to do your part ... you have to walk uprightly. We walk uprightly when we live according to the principles of His Word.

Let me encourage you to find a quiet place where you can be still, hear the voice of the Lord and gain the strength you need to fight the good fight of faith. Take time every day in

God's presence, praying and filling your mind with Scripture. The exciting thing about meditating on God's Word is that even when you leave your quiet place and start another busy day, your mind and spirit are still processing what you read — which means the benefits of meditating on Scripture influence your whole day!

As we walk this life of faith together, we need to remember how many have yet to experience the peace that comes from having a personal relationship with the living Savior. Your prayers and gifts to support this ministry enable us to share this Good News. Thank you so much for your support ... and be assured God is using your gifts to sow seeds of life, hope and blessing every day.

Be encouraged today. I believe that your very best days are ahead. Days filled with more joy, peace, encouragement, healing, restoration and hope.

Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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