

The Two Biggest Parenting Mistakes

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The two biggest mistakes parents and teachers make in dealing with children are: Too Much Talking and Too Much Emotion. Talking is bad because it either doesn't work or takes you through the Talk-Persuade-Argue-Yell-Hit Syndrome.

Why is too much emotion destructive? When they are little, kids feel inferior because they ARE inferior. Sure, they can be cute and lovable, but they are also smaller, less privileged, less intelligent, less skillful, less responsible and less of just about everything than their parents and the older kids. And this "lessness" bugs them a lot! They don't like it. They do like to feel they are powerful and capable of making some mark on the world.



Have you ever seen a small child go down to a lake and throw rocks in the water? Children can do that for hours, partly because the big splashes are a sign of their impact. They are making things happen.

What does rock tossing have to do with what happens at home? If your small child can get big old you all upset, your upset is the big splash for him. It's not that he has no conscience and is going to grow up to be a criminal. It's just that having all that power temporarily rewards—or feels good to—the inferior part of the child. Parents who say, "It drives me absolutely crazy when she eats her dinner with her fingers. Why does she do that?" may have already answered their own question. She may do that at least partly BECAUSE IT DRIVES YOU CRAZY.

There are certainly other discipline systems other than the 1-2-3, but you can ruin any of them by talking too much and getting too excited. These two mistakes, of course, usually go hand in hand, and the emotion is usually anger.

Some parents can turn off the talking and the emotional upset like a faucet, and others have to work like dogs to get the job done. Even then, they often have to remind themselves over and over that talking and arguing and yelling and screaming don't really help. These tactics merely blow off steam for a few seconds. If parents find that they can't shake these habits, some sort of outpatient counseling or psychotherapy is indicated.

Quick Tip: A Deal You Can't Refuse!?

Remember that a child who is testing you is offering you a deal: Give me what I want and my badgering, temper tantrum, threat or martyrdom will end—immediately! Does that sound like a deal you can't refuse? Accept it and you're in trouble.

For more simple, straightforward parenting advice and helpful tips from [Dr. Thomas Phelan's](http://www.parentmagic.com) best-selling parenting programs visit www.parentmagic.com.

Adapted from:

1-2-3 Magic Effective Discipline for Children 2-12 New 3RD Edition by Dr. Thomas Phelan. To learn more visit www.parentmagic.com.