

EMPOWERING vs ENABLING

(from *Positive Discipline* by Lynn Lott and Jane Nelson)

Enabling: “Getting between young people and life experiences to minimize the consequences of their choices.”

- Doing too much for them
- Giving them too much
- Overprotecting/controlling
- Fixing
- Bailing them out

Empowering: “Turning control over to young people as soon as possible so they have power over their own lives.”

- Listening and giving emotional support and validation without fixing or discounting
- Teaching life skills
- Working on agreements through family meetings or the joint problem-solving process
- Letting go (without abandoning)
- Deciding what you will do with dignity and respect
- Sharing what you think, how you feel, and what you want (without lecturing, moralizing, insisting on agreement, or demanding that anyone give you what you want)
- Sticking to the issue with dignity and respect

EMPOWERMENT SUGGESTIONS:

Showing Faith. “I have faith in you. I trust you to figure out what you need. I know that when it’s important to you, you’ll know what to do.”

Respecting Privacy. “I respect your privacy and want you to know I’m available if you want to discuss this with me.”

Expressing Your Limits. “I’m not willing to go to school to bail you out. When your teacher calls, I’ll hand the phone to you or tell her she’ll need to discuss it with you.”

Listen Without Fixing or Judging. “I would like to listen to what this means for you.”

Controlling Your Own Behavior. “I’m willing to help you to the library when we get in an agreement in advance for a convenient time, but I’m not willing to get involved at the last minute.”

“If you need help with your homework, please let me know in advance, so I can plan my time accordingly.”

Letting Go of Their Issues. “I hope you’ll go to college, but I’m not sure if this is important to you.”

Agreement, Not Rules. “Could we sit down and see if we can work on a plan regarding homework that we both can live with?”

Loving and Encouraging. “I love you just the way you are and respect you to choose what is right for you.”

Asking for help. “I need your help. Can you explain to me why it isn’t important to you to do your homework?”

Share Your Feelings. Share your truth by using the “I feel _____ because _____ and I wish” process without expecting anyone else to feel the same or grant your wish. This is a great model for children to acknowledge their feelings and wishes without expectations. “I feel upset when you don’t do your homework because I value your education so much and think it could be very beneficial to you in your life, and I really wish you would do it.”

Joint Problem Solving. “What is your picture of what is going on regarding your homework? Would you be *willing* to hear my concerns? Could we brainstorm together on some possible solutions?”

Respectful Communication. “I’m feeling too upset to talk about this right now. Let’s put it on the agenda for the family meeting so we can talk about it when I’m not so emotional.”

Information vs Orders. “I notice you spend a lot of time watching television and talking on the phone during the time you have set aside for homework.” “I notice you often leave your homework until the last minute and then feel discouraged about getting it done.”