

Fueling Good Versus Evil

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Everyone is capable of both good and evil behavior. Even when doing something bad or evil, people often justify their behavior with some supposedly good reason. This allows them to maintain their good self-image.

There are many stories of someone committing murder who you'd least expect to do this. When the news reporters interview the neighbors or family members, they express shock and bewilderment. They did not believe this person was capable of murdering. Time and time again there is dismay when good people do evil things.

Acknowledging the Potential for Good and Evil

Everyone is capable of incredibly loving behavior and devastatingly cruel behavior. How do you teach your children about tipping the scale towards good rather than evil?

One of the first steps is recognizing the ability for both good and evil exists in each of us. In this Native American parable, a Cherokee grandfather explains to his grandson the pull between good and evil:

"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

He replied, "The one you feed."

Recognizing Feelings Behind Behavior

Your feelings drive your behavior. Feelings are neither right or wrong. However, the behavior that is fueled from the feelings may or may not be acceptable.

You begin teaching your children about the need to rein in their aggressive behavior when they are young. They may get angry about a toy they want that another child has. When they hit the other child, you step in to let them know that hitting is not OK. Although they are mad, that does not give them permission to hit someone.

When experiencing anger, envy or resentment, your kids are more likely to act in ways that are malicious. You can help them learn the wisdom of taking a break to cool down. Letting themselves calm down helps them release the intensity of the negative feelings. Calming down before choosing what to do will allow them to act from their higher selves.

It's helpful for your kids to recognize when they are starting to get upset before they feel like they are going to explode. Dr. Daniel Siegel calls losing control "flipping your lid". His "brain in the palm of your hand" model demonstrates the brain's response to stress. You can watch a [short video where he teaches this model](#). Learning it will help your kids understand how their strong emotions can affect their thoughts and behavior.

When your kids realize they are starting to get upset, they can step away to regroup. You can also model this for your kids by taking a time out yourself when you are starting to get angry. What do you do if your kids see you erupt in rage? You can always go back and apologize letting them know how you plan to handle it better in the future.

Energizing Good Feelings

Feelings arise and then go away. In order keep feelings active, you need to think about people or situations that provoke those feelings. If you want to feel outraged, you need to dwell on something that makes you feel outraged. If you want to feel gratitude, you can begin by listing everything you appreciate.

It's hard to imagine behaving in a way that would hurt someone while you are in a state of joy or gratitude. Maintaining these peaceful, loving states is not easy. What do you do to increase your feelings of kindness and compassion? What do your children do?

You both probably have different ways to do this. These are some things you might do to increase your feelings of contentment and happiness:

- Deep breathing, meditating or praying
- Doing yoga or dancing
- Coloring or drawing
- Going for a walk or run
- Playing an instrument or listening to music
- Writing in a journal
- Reading inspirational books or stories

Making activities that bring you joy part of your daily routine is a key to success. [Daily self-care routines are essential](#) to showing up as your best self. When you are in a better mood, your behavior will naturally be kinder.

Taking time to create more inner peace is a wonderful investment. This does not mean that you escape taking any action. However, when you do act it will be from a higher place with healthier choices.

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