

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Sharing a Giggle to Promote Harmony

WANT YOUR CHILD TO LISTEN? Several seconds (or more) of silliness can bring about cooperation in the most difficult situations. For example, when we're trying to get everyone ready quickly, our tone usually gets more serious: "Do it now." "Move more quickly without getting sidetracked." Getting distracted by humor for a few moments often lubricates things to move along more effectively than pressure. Asking a child if his shoes go on his ears when he's supposed to put them on or pretending that you are going to wear his jacket can change everyone's mood – especially ours.

Since humor presents a little puzzle for the mind to unravel, it takes the child's mind off doing something she doesn't want. Laughter warms our child's heart because it sends the message that we enjoy being playful even if it's just for a moment. Every time we use humor (non-sarcastic) with a child, we also provide a role model for relating well to others. Children who laugh easily usually engage with others more skillfully.

Of course, remembering to inject a lighthearted tone when we have a goal to achieve, like getting children to bed or into their baths, isn't easy. But those are the times when sharing a giggle helps the most. Since science tells us that the act of smiling actually makes us feel more positive, reminding ourselves to lighten our expression when we need our child to do something is often the first step toward a harmonious process.

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