

Fairness

“The Wacky Watermelon Break-In”

Understanding Fairness from Your Child’s Point of View:

“The Wacky Watermelon Break-In” teaches children that life is not always fair. Lemon Lion thinks that her life is unfair because she can’t do all the things that the “big kids” do. What she finds out is that she isn’t really ready yet for certain privileges older kids have (like skipping an afternoon nap!) Meanwhile, Spike, Bubba and Danny come to the big day to pick their prize watermelon, only to discover mice living inside! Mr. Quigley explains that although things in life sometimes aren’t fair, we can count on God always to be fair.

Here are some things to consider in teaching your child about fairness.

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3 & 4 year-olds reason through intuition, not logic. They have difficulty understanding relationships and rules. So, in their self-centeredness, they think that “fair” is whatever they want. Parents can help them be positive by coming up with creative alternatives in conflict situations, and avoiding “no” and using “yes” whenever possible. For example, children this age may think they are too “big” for nap time, so parents could call it a “quiet time,” and even allow them to look at picture books while on the bed. Three and four-year-olds may also be encouraged to make trade-offs, that is, to bargain and do something parents want them to do (like nap) in order to do something that they want to do (like play outside).
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5 & 6 year-olds are beginning to know that others have rights and are more interested in conforming to rules. They are usually cooperative, but may respond negatively to criticism and punishment by sulking or being rude. Parents can help by explaining to children why certain behaviors are necessary, instead of simply expecting these behaviors. Children can also be encouraged to use language to express their feelings, and not just act them out. Remember, your household rules need not be the same as others, even if your children think “that’s not fair!”
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7 & 8 year-olds can think about things, but still think in terms of concrete objects, rather than in terms of abstract concepts and ideas - like fairness. They are, however, beginning to know right from wrong and will sometimes use this distinction to act as tattletales. As children become more social, games become more and more important. However, youngsters may not always “play fair” and may unintentionally break the rules because they simply can’t remember two things at once: what they want to do and what they are supposed to do. Parents can encourage children of these ages by playing games with them and positive reinforcement can be communicated by comments like “Good move!” or “You’re playing real well!” as opposed to comments like “Stop cheating.” Other positive phrases you can use are: “I like how you remembered that rule.” “Thank you for reminding your sister to collect her cards.”

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Follow Up Activities for You and Your Child

- 1 Create “lifelines” for each family member. List duties and freedoms they acquired at various ages. Notice they are different as they get older. Fill in the blanks in this sentence: “When I was ___ (age), I could _____ (something you did then). When I am ___ (age), I will _____ (something you’ll do).”
- 2 Play the “Take Turns” game! Player 1 makes an animal noise, which the others repeat. Player 1 selects another player, who makes an animal noise, which the others repeat. When everyone has had a turn, you could take turns making funny faces or naming friends.
- 3 Encourage your child’s imaginative development by providing props to help children engage in make-believe play. For example, in the imaginative adventure on the video, Spike, Danny and Bubba became “space farmers.” You might want to provide props for youngsters to pretend they are mail carriers, like Molly. Collect used envelopes, an old typewriter, used stamps, tape, boxes, paper, a large handbag, a hat, a large box for a mailbox, rubber stamps and pad, paper, pencils and crayons.
- 4 Work together as a family to make fruit salad. Even 3-year-olds can help cut fruit with plastic knives, under supervision.