

Sunday box helps kids put toys away

PARENT'S CORNER

Genie: (Poo!) "I am the genie of the lamp. I am here to grant you every wish!"

Parent: "Any wish I want?"

Genie: "Yes! I can give you riches beyond your wildest dreams. I can make you rulers of all the land. I can create world peace, stop global warming, write your name in the stars! Your wish is my command."

Parent: "Can you get my kids to put their toys away before bedtime?"

Genie: "Ah, um ... well, I can't do that."

Would you like your young children to take responsibility for putting away their toys each day WITHOUT nagging, reminding, anger, or threats? If so, the Sunday box is the answer you've been looking for.

It sounds impossible, but there is an effective way to enforce kids to pick up their belongings while allowing parents to remain calm and friendly. This amazing parenting tool goes by several different names, but I learned it as "the Sunday box."

Through the grapevine

The Sunday box is a technique that has been passed down the grapevine in parenting classes for years. Many parents, including myself, have found it to be the key to making

clean-up the child's problem, not the parent's frustration. If used correctly, all the toys will be picked up without you saying a word. To make it work effectively, you first need to understand the steps.

To start up the Sunday box, you will need any old cardboard box. Next, call a family meeting. In a friendly voice, tell the kids, "Hey guys, you've now got a choice. You can pick up your toys before bedtime or you can leave them out and have me put them away for you."

Just imagine the looks of disbelief on their little faces. Be sure to continue, "When mom or dad picks up the toys, they will go into the Sunday box. Once a toy is put in the box it will stay there until Sunday with no exceptions. On Sunday, you can choose to take your toys out of the box, or leave them in. Any toys left in the box for three weeks in a row will be given away."

It is also helpful to ask, "Can you explain to me how the Sunday box works, so that we both understand it the same way?"

Remember to add, "Since you understand the rules, I'll respect you enough not to nag or remind you." Be sure to resist the temptation to remind them.

The Sunday box works even with kids who are not terribly verbal, and believe me, when my youngest was 2 years old, he

'Success depends on an attitude that shows you understand their feelings.'

Marilyn Suttle
—parent facilitator

figured out the Sunday box rules faster than his older brother. One night, about 15 minutes after being tucked into bed, he came racing into the family room. He flew behind the recliner, grabbed a little Elmo toy, and with great relief, ran back to bed.

Stay consistent

Be consistent. Do not leave any of their toys out for them to find the next day. Be sure you are rested up and committed before you begin the process.

Starting the Sunday box means more work for you, at first. Keep in mind that the Sunday box is a tool to help children learn to take responsibility for putting away their toys, not a punishment. Learning takes time. Expect to have a lot, and I mean a lot of toys in the Sunday box the first week or two.

Being prepared for your children's reactions will give you the strength to resist doing the two things that will destroy the effectiveness of the Sunday box.

Those two things are scolding and caving in. You can just imagine how your little darlings will react when they realize their toys really did end up in "The Box."

You might be tempted to remind them with, "I told you so ... that's what you get for not cleaning up!" This response from you may cause your kids to feel resentment and blame you for their problems.

You might want to be a "nice" parent and give them just one more chance. Stop and ask yourself: How nice am I being to rob my child of the consequences of his actions? How nice will it be when those clever kids figure out that with enough whining and begging, the Sunday box rules fall apart? Is the sadness my children feel at the loss of a toy for one week worth the lesson in responsibility that will serve them the rest of their lives?

Success depends on an attitude that shows you understand their feelings. Be prepared to feel "sad" for them, not angry or irritated.

"I can see how sad you feel to be without your Legos," and sympathetically tell them, "You'll get your toys back on Sunday." These types of comments will keep you from getting sucked into an argument and allow your children to think about what they can do to prevent this from happening again.



Marilyn Suttle

After the first few weeks of consistently using the Sunday box, you will have a clean home, happy kids, and more harmony. Maybe the Sunday box isn't a magic lamp, but it works like a charm.

Marilyn Suttle is a Farmington Youth Assistance family education facilitator and independent speaker/trainer on parenting and self-improvement issues.

She has appeared on a cable television show and provides businesses with on-site parenting classes. You can email her at MsSuttle@aol.com.

JCC offers arts camps

A camp of the arts is offered as part of the Jewish Community Center's summer camp lineup.

There are two four-week sessions at the JCC's D. Dan and Betty Kahn building on the Eugene and Marcia Applebaum Jewish community campus in West Bloomfield.

The camp is offered for kids ages 7-16, Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

This program is designed for the young aspiring actor and offers intensive training to help campers appreciate and understand the inner workings of the theater.

Campers will focus on the expressive use of voice and body, stage orientation and usage, building and refining characters, performing and working with a director.

The camp will conclude with a performance of a Broadway musical production.

Campers may take this show on the road to perform for other JCCs and senior facilities. This year's productions are *Grease* and *Gyps and Dolls*.

For information or a brochure, call the Summer Camps office at 661-1010.

Author offers parents tips

When it comes to handling kids, most parents know they're amateurs. The challenge is they're supposed to be professionals. Parents are somehow supposed to know just what to do with children on a daily basis.

Phillip Mountrose, educator and author of "Getting Thru to Kids" communication series, helps identify common parenting mistakes and suggests some practical remedies:

■ Inconsistency with rules. If you don't follow through on rules, children learn that you don't really mean what you say. Your inconsistency also produces anxiety in both you and your children. Tell kids what you want them to do, and then have them do it.

■ Adults talking too much. "Kids just don't listen." This common complaint by adults brings up the question: How did kids acquire these poor listening skills? Adults tend to dominate discussions with children. When you talk to kids after careful listening, you are more informed and aware. Then your words mean more and kids naturally listen to you.

■ Words not matching your actions. Too often children see their elders blaming, denying, and accusing instead of owning up to mistakes. Children welcome it when you admit that you erred or don't know something, acknowledging that you struggle, too. Like fresh air, your honesty comes as a relief to kids. They are liberated, no longer dependent on the all-knowing adult. Children then become freer to learn from their mistakes and grow as well.

■ Poor boundaries. Here is an easy explanation of boundaries for children: Tell them there is you - your body and possessions, and the rest of the world is not you. Some other boundaries: such as not discussing a person's income, weight or age, may vary from person to person. Children should be sensitized to these areas. Also, help children become aware of approaching a person who has experienced upsetting changes, such as a divorce or death of a loved one.

■ Not spending enough quality time with kids. Find ways to have fun with your children. Ask them what they want to do. Remember to listen to them. Enjoy the silent times, too, when you are just together. Set a goal to spend time doing things and being with your child. It will benefit everyone.

Phillip Mountrose's award-winning books "Getting Thru to Kids: Problem Solving with Children Ages 6-18" and "Tips and Tools For Getting Thru to Kids" are available at bookstores or on the Internet at Amazon.com or direct from Holistic Communications (800) 431-1579. The newest book in his communication series is "Getting Thru to Your Emotions with EFT: Tap into Your Hidden Potential with the Emotional Freedom Techniques" co-written with his wife Jane Mountrose.

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