parenting *ideas

insights

Teach your kids about time and place

by Michael Grose

My mum used to tell me, "There's a time and place for everything Michael, and this is not the time and place to behave like that!"

My mum's words came back to me as I watched three kids (tweens and early teens) try to out-wrestle and out-shout each other while they waited in an airport queue with their parents. Their noise and wrestling quite obviously disturbed and interfered with fellow travellers, but their parents made no attempt to rein in their behaviour.

I couldn't help thinking that there is a time and place for this type of behaviour and THIS WAS NEITHER OF THOSE!

Time and place is a brilliant socialisation lesson for children of any age or era to absorb.

It starts by asking yourself as a parent: "*What does this social situation reasonably require of my children at their age and stage of development?*"

In the above case it's reasonable to expect tweens and teens to be able to stand in a queue without disturbing others for the ten minutes that it took to get service. It's should be easy for that age group to show some self-control and consideration for others.

That timeframe maybe a stretch for under fives, but some parental attention to distract them from being bored may do the trick. The principle is the same regardless of age or a child's developmental stage, but the application varies.

Socialising kids

It's a parent's job to socialise your kids. That is, it's your job to develop a sense of OTHER so that they become aware of how their behaviour impacts on others. Many kids have L Plates when it comes to behaving in public so they need your assistance to behave according to the requirements of the situation – or according to the time and place. You do this by:

1. Giving your kids social scripts

There are times when kids don't know what to say or how to act in different social situations. *"Here's what you can say when you meet Mrs Smith…"* is the type of pre-emptive social scripting that benefits most boys, kids on the autism spectrum as well as kids who need extra help to get on with others.

2. Regular behaviour rehearsal

Practise appropriate social behaviours at home so kids know how to behave around others. For example, you can role-play a restaurant situation by serving your kids' meals at the dinner table and expecting them to use their manners.

3. Just-in-time prompts

It helps to remind in positive terms how kids should speak and act around others before entering a social situation or a special place such as a church, airport or restaurant. *"In church most people…"*

4. Teaching good manners

Manners are social guidelines that teach kids how to behave around others. While some conventions change over time, basic good manners such as saying 'please' and 'thank you' never change. They are the basis of a civil society. Kids are never too young to start learning manners.

5. Respectful use of consequences

While the best discipline happens before an event *(through behaviour rehearsal, prompts and teaching manners)* there are times when the only way to get a message across about time and place is to DO something if the kids' behaviour thoughtlessly or deliberately impinges on the rights of others. And the best action may be WITHDRAWAL from the place or activity that they are doing. That may mean that the kids (and you) miss out on an activity or being in a special place but such lessons are rarely forgotten and reinforce your important messages.

Time and place is a great parenting message for kids to learn. It's about consideration for others; it's about self-control and above all else, it's about fitting into different social situations.

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