

# NO EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

PARENT: Instead of focusing so much on consequences, I think we should have our children do the things they are supposed to do because they will be letting us down if they do not.

SANDY: Most of us were raised by parents who made it very clear that we were letting them down when we didn't behave. The message was "Do what I want you to do and I will love you." The problem with this strategy is that it creates people *pleasing rather* than learning to make choices that enhance the quality of your life. It also harms the child to have a parent's precious love removed.

Colleges and Universities are dealing with out of control students who are out from under the thumb of parents who demanded good behavior and held back their love as blackmail.

Every time I lecture, I tell parents, "If I were mature enough to tell you one thing and go home this is what it would be: Never, ever, under-any-circumstance take your love away as your method of controlling a child." A parent needs to be very clear in separating a child from his/her actions, "Yes, I am angry that you took the cookie. Yes, there will be a consequence. This is not about loving you. I always love you. Now the consequence for that choice will be....."

Children need to learn that life is about choices; every minute of every day you are making choices. For each of those choices there is a consequence; some are positive, some are negative. If the focus is not on the choice the child has made, he/she fools him/herself into thinking that someone is "doing it" to him/her. The child fails to take responsibility for his/her choices.

If rules and consequences are fair, consistently served without undue anger, and the child always knows that he/she is loved, that child will respect the adults in charge. In addition, that child is more likely to choose not to "let the parents down."