



P.O. Box 22910
 Gayridge
 Margate 4275
 KwaZulu-Natal
 Tel: + 27 39 317 2761
 Fax: + 27 39 317 2945
 E-mail: admin@gcf.org.za
 Website: www.gcf.org.za
 REG NO: IT 5570/1992/PMB
 NPO NO:004-524

THE FEVER: FYI COLUMN-

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"IT IS EASIER TO BUILD STRONG CHILDREN, THAN TO REPAIR BROKEN MEN"

These words were quoted by Fredrick Douglass in 1855.

Behaviour can be seen as the way children responds to a set of conditions, but by being pro-active we can save a lot of time and effort by intervening as early as possible when we see behavioural problems or trouble starting.

Imagine our children are like a growing garden. If weeds are left in a garden, they will choke out all the good stuff like flowers and vegetables. It is the same with our children, if we do not discipline them appropriately, the good in them will be choked out too. If we give plants no fertilizer, they will not develop very well and the flowers and vegetables will be small. Children need proper food as well so they can physically develop correctly. If plants are not watered they will shrivel up and die. If we do not take the time to talk, play with and hug our children, they will die emotionally. So we need time to grow our children, just as we need time to grow, tend, weed, water and feed a garden. Time is the best gift we can give our children.

Understanding the challenging behaviour displayed by our children can go a long way in helping us deal with it. Like weeds, we need to address it at root level and remove it, or else it will grow back and the challenging behaviour will continue.

Challenging behaviour can stem from a feeling or belief, such as anger or pain in their hearts. Unless we find the cause of the anger or hurt and help our child deal with it, we won't be able to help our children change their behaviour.

Behind every behaviour is a need, and if this need is not met, the behaviour will remain. Children and young people want to be accepted and feel like they belong, even if it means they sometimes behave in ways they usually would not. Your responsibility is not to judge them, but help them find out why they feel the way they feel and help them find a better and more appropriate way for them to express their feeling and needs.

If your children feel accepted and valued, they will not need to behave in unacceptable ways to get their needs met.

You need to rectify their negative behaviour by actively identifying problem behaviour and re-educating

them, so they can master new behaviour patterns and avoid old problems.

Start by looking at yourself and their environment. Children will mimic our behaviour and the behaviour of those around them, like friends, teachers and siblings. Change or help them to remove themselves from the bad influence.

We must be pro-active and prevent unacceptable behaviour, such as two of your children having an argument, which could lead to hitting each other. Intervene as soon as the argument starts, and show them how to settle their difference without resorting to hitting. Teach them the right way.

Create order, such as a daily routine as it reduces the number of decision our children have to make on a daily basis. An effective routine will help you and make your children feel secure.

In our next column we will discuss the Ten Guidelines in Managing Children's Behaviour in a fair and appropriate way.

And in case you miss out, you can always read more at www.gcf.org.za or www.southcoastfever.co.za