

“BOYS WILL BE BOYS!”

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

How many times have we heard that statement? What do people mean when they say it? When I hear this declaration I immediately think of boys who play rough, play hard, or get into mischief – with emphasis on the latter. I know that girls and boys act and play differently. The same statement can be said about girls. “Girls will be girls.” What does that mean? Girls can be catty, manipulative and fight, too. I believe the above statements are often made to make excuses for poor behavior.

What about, “All toddlers throw tantrums,” “All kids tell lies,” or “All kids steal.” Those statements are possibly true, but does this mean that these behaviors are OK, like kids can’t help it? Do we just shrug and hope our kids will just grow out of it? I agree that we live in an imperfect world and that all those who live therein are imperfect, too. We are flawed by nature and we don’t automatically do the right thing, but should we excuse our negative behavior by creating sweeping statements that suggest and promote a sense of helplessness? NO! The mature and appropriate response is to deal with it.

Similarly, Christians often say of themselves, “After all, we are only human.” In other words, “It’s OK to mess up. We can’t help it.” Yes, everyone messes up, but is it OK to keep messing up over the same thing? NO! “The Devil made me do it.” Sure! Right!

The other day I was listening to a talk back radio host. He was indicating that kids are often too sheltered. He stated that kids should hear their parents arguing. That this is the real world and kids should just grow up and deal with it. Is he saying, “Parents will be parents?” Is this yet another excuse for unacceptable behavior? What standard are we settling for as parents? Yes, there are times when we get frustrated and express ourselves disrespectfully. I well remember a situation I am not proud of. My husband was away and my kids were getting on my wick, big time! At one point my 10 year-old yelled at my 8 year-old, “Quick, Kristy. Duck! Mom’s having a spasm!” It was such a funny thing to say that we all ended up laughing about it. However, this was not mature behavior on my part. Our goal should be to create a peaceful, safe environment for our family. Was my behavior acceptable? No!

How do we teach our kids effective ways to settle their differences, when we shout and argue after allowing ourselves to get caught up in the ‘moment’? “You made me so mad I,” is not taking responsibility for my own response. I allowed myself to get angry. We need to learn how to deal with what life throws at us and refrain from uttering excuses. The next step is for us to appropriately manage our own behavior. Then we teach our kids to do the same thing.

I believe that one of the greatest virtues we should teach our children is accountability for our own actions. Why? Because we **are** accountable for our own actions! Kids will stay in a suspended state of irresponsibility when we excuse their poor behavior. When we bail our kids out of unacceptable behavior, because we believe that “kids will be kids,” they will continue to think that their parents will come to the rescue. They will believe that others are always to blame, and that anything they do is acceptable. This attitude will not fit them for the responsibilities of adult life.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.