



NATURAL SOLUTIONS

Clinical Kinesiology, Acupuncture, & (w)Holistic Healthcare

Susan L. Levy, D.C., DABCO, FIACA

Author of *Your Body Can Talk* & *Your AGING Body Can Talk*

[facebook/YourBodyCanTalk](https://www.facebook.com/YourBodyCanTalk)

YourBodyCanTalk2@Gmail.com

www.YourBodyCanTalk.com

A critically important facet for optimizing children's health is how the parents choose to guide, teach, correct, and inspire their children. The parenting path chosen dramatically affects how the children see themselves as human beings and how they choose to interact with those around them.

This month, I've asked a guest writer to contribute to the newsletter on this topic. His name is Ronald Ross III, known as Trillo by family and friends. He and his wife and have several children whom they love dearly, and they have worked hard to establish deep bonds with each of their little ones. They recognize the individuality, the gifts and talents, and the challenges of each child uniquely, and they seek to operate within that construct in their parenting approach. They teach and guide their children in life's lessons according to the principles and practical tips that Trillo shares here in this article.

- Dr. Susan Levy

From Negative to Positive Parenting through Boundaries

by Ronald "Trillo" Ross III

In my attempt to back off and let them be kids I found that, shock, kids don't always behave the way you, the mature responsible adult want them to behave. Because they're NOT mature responsible adults! In fact, without my natural tendency to "helicopter parent" they pretty much turn into a primitive little society of messy selfish want machines. Duh. This should not come as a surprise, but here I am, hiding in the bathroom from the chaotic warzone my boys have made out of what I still remember used to be called the Living Room, every bit as stressed as when I tried the Control Freak approach, only this time with a *different kind* of stress.

NO IS PAINFUL

NO is painful. You wouldn't say it to a boss or friend. You'd pacify. You'd explain politely that you already had plans (months in advance!), and won't be available that evening. You duck and dodge. You play a no like a yes. Because you're not a monster. You know how to survive in a civilized society. You are able to let someone down gently, and use enough praise and complements to sooth and buffer. NO is just too blunt, like hitting a brick wall.

That's what no feels like. Disgusting. Like you're worthless. Meaningless. NO. An unassailable wall.



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As adults, even if we don't have children it's easy to see a no for what it is, an opportunity for growth. A careful evaluation can be made of our approach and what we did or didn't do to try to get a yes before we were rejected. Often, we can find ways to go back again and this time get that yes. Other times, we walk away one day older and wiser than the day before. But either way, we can breathe, process that no, stand up, and move forward.

Kids can't do any of that. Because they're CHILDREN. You probably have socks older than this "humanlet". And those socks probably have more common sense and self-preservation wisdom too! From the adult perspective, kids can make you just plain crazy. Do you really need me to teach you how NOT to put a penny up your nose? Or not to stick your finger in an electrical outlet? Or not to run around naked? Or not to run through Walmart honking like geese? REALLY????? Who needs to be taught these things?!

Kids do. Because they're CHILDREN. I know. I know. Nobody ever had to tell YOU no when you were young and stupid. You were the good one. Well, okay, you got in trouble too... but... these kids today?? I would NEVER have acted like that and gotten away with it. Would you have? I didn't think so. We just knew better. At least it seemed like it. And we heard NO all the time. I mean, ALL THE TIME.

Mom, can I have ice cream for breakfast? NO.

Dad, can I have \$2.99 for this worthless piece of plastic that I'll break in an hour and half? NO.

Mom, can I wear flip-flops and trunks in the snow? NO.

Can I grow up to be the king of England? NO.

But this isn't back then, is it? Those days are gone. The world has leapt forward. Our parents (who did just fine, thank you!) were barely able to keep up back then. How can we hope to understand raising tomorrow's successful adults when we feel like we can't even figure out for ourselves how to be successful adults and role models in THIS day and age?

Kids today are surrounded by more YESes than at any time in history. There are ENDLESS opportunities for their generation, and the walls that would have traditionally kept them from achieving their dreams are quickly disintegrating. Remember back when your grandma would put the cookies up high so they wouldn't disappear? Mice, she said. For better and worse, there is NOTHING out of reach for a ten year old today. And I mean nothing.

It's imperative that we educate kids at a young age about their media choices and how it DOES affect their futures. We know that. We're not ignorant. We put child-protection filters on our phones and tablets, but we know that if you're betting the farm on filters, you're a fool. That's why we talk to our children too. Explain things to them in a way that is surely WAY too adult. You should never have to talk like this to an innocent little kid, but you do it anyway. Because you love them. Because you can't bear the thought of them being hurt. You tell them NO.

Or do you?



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Are you telling them that they can never have a phone or tablet? Never see a movie? Never pass a billboard or watch a shampoo commercial? Of course not! You tell them, “Don’t watch THIS. I won’t say a word about many other shows, but don’t watch THIS.”

Whether or not you as the adult realize it, and I assure you the child does not realize it, you are actually trying to teach the kiddo to say YES, just to something different. The problem is that in doing so, we’ve become the evil NO monster, capable of granting joy with the utterance of a word, yet without the love and care to do it. Villain. Or at least the grump who says NO ten times more than YES. In a world that says YES ten times more than it says NO.

Worst of all, it can come to characterize your own vision of how you parent. You begin to see yourself as the No Machine, slapping down requests like a four year old does in a field of grasshoppers. You can at times even come to think of the children as a bother, a disruption in your otherwise orderly-ish world.

That’s not who we want to be. Not us. Not our home. Not ever. I like these kids! I fervently want the best future possible for THEM. For their kids and grandkids. We all have a deep-rooted mutual caring sentiment for each other. We are their parents. We know them like no one else on earth. We know their hopes, their dreams, their skills and setbacks, their natural tendencies, and the parts of their lives they have worked hard to develop. If anyone out there can figure out the best paths for these little already-successes, then dang it, it’s gonna be us! We’re going to make it happen. We’re going to give them the best childhood possible, and the best adulthood chances possible. We’re going to raise them as individuals instead of as children. We’re going to see where they need help and help them. We’re going to do it. It may not be perfect, but it’s going to be the best we can offer.

And, just like that, we turned this whole parenting thing on its head. It’s not about the spilled milk; it’s about understanding that you can make a small mistake, recover from it and move forward. It’s not about being up past bedtime; it’s about instilling in your children a sense of order. It’s not about the messy room; it’s about patiently cultivating their ability to turn a mess into a success, and develop organizational skills. Because that’s what we want for them as adults. Success.

OVERCOMABLE

So the NO becomes a YES. The negative CAN be transcended. We can rise above the frustration of the moment by simply seeing the bigger picture – thinking generationally. It does not always make the moment easier, just... “overcomable”. Spell-check says that’s not a word, but I’m writing to tell you, it IS. IT IS OVERCOMABLE. Every situation is “overcomable”. Every negative word is “overcomable”. Every angry moment is “overcomable”. Every insult against your pride as the grown-up is “overcomable”. Because it’s no longer about us and our frustration. We have a goal to work towards.



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That's where boundaries come in. I don't know about you, but when I was a kid, I thought parenting was all about the grown-ups setting boundaries for the kids. "Because they love us," was our reasoning whenever they put up barriers in our lives. NO, you can't spend the night at that kid's house. NO you can't go that movie. NO, you can't drink alcohol or smoke or do drugs.

But now that I'm the one saying NO, I'm discovering that I have to say no to MYSELF as much as the kids. Children's boundaries are child's play compared to adult boundaries. And here's the hard part: I have to set my own boundaries! When you are a child its relatively easy – follow the instructions and all will be well. But as an adult I not only have to follow the instructions, I have to write them too. I have to set the limit for my responses and reactions. I have to intentionally become a Negativity Hunter – setting my sights on any opportunity to transform a complaint into a complement, a whine into a win.

And that's the whole game. To turn a NO into a YES. A *Conditional* YES.

"Yes, you can play more, but only after your bath" (or "you can play with bath toys"). Instead of saying "NO candy!" try maybe, "Sure, on Sunday!" Or, "How about some grapes?" It's about finding a way to say YES to a need, and not necessarily a request. "Yes, a microscope would be fun, wouldn't it? Why don't we put it on your Amazon wish list? Then as you save up you can purchase it whenever you want!" Try experimenting with *Yes If* (if you clean your room by 3 you may watch your show), and it's second cousin *Yes Later*. Or, *Yes, In Another Place* (you may go play football, in the back yard!). Or even, *Yes In Theory* or *Imagination* (that would be awesome! Which one would you get if we could make it happen?).

It does not mean granting every demand or desire though. Positive Parenting actually sets the same limits as negative! It just does so in a way that makes the child feel like they are growing and gaining and being lifted up. In Calvin & Hobbes, his dad always told him things like "camping in the rain builds character!" but the kid never believed Dad's story. And the kid HAS to believe it. Positive Parenting sets boundaries on the parent that makes the child FEEL (and yes, that's the key word) like he is taller when he is done.

Do not label your children as problems!! Ungrateful and Demanding behaviors can easily trigger adults, but yelling at them for it only makes them defensive. We have to approach every situation like a battlefield general who not only picks his battles, but also can see how to come in from the side and avoid a face-to-face conflict.

Part of this is conditioning them to respond, not as children, but as a family. By participating as a family group, they are learning about society and how to function outside of a boss-employee relationship. Think about how many people you've met that only know the slave-slavemaster mentality. Is that what you want for YOUR legacy? I was raised in the model that when the grown-ups are talking, you as a child are not allowed to speak. Then I had to re-learn how to have conversations with adults when I became one! I'd rather develop their abilities now.



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And it's easier to have family events than you think. Adopt a charity as a family. Include your children in the monthly budget meeting. Allow THEM to become part of the giving, feeling the value of their own contributions. Volunteer. Even playing a family board game helps develop comradery and the spirit of cooperation! As a family, visit the elderly, sick children, pet shelter, neighbors, church, etc. Sure, it'd be ten times easier on ME to just send them out of the room and clean it for them! But by getting in there as a family and doing it together you can keep them on track AND teach them how a grown-up works without playing until its done.

You may have to constantly remind yourself at first, but being PROACTIVE means you don't have to be REACTIVE later. But to be proactive means to view ourselves, our lives, and our CHILDREN with optimism. Don't say "You are bad." Say "You are good! You are kind! You are great! And sometimes you have bad behavior, make poor choices, or unthinkingly hurt someone, we all do. But it's not who you are."

NO SUCH THING AS BLOWING IT

Which leads us to the final thought here. There are moments, both as a child and in parenting, when we come face to face with our most imperfect selves. We must not pretend those moments do not exist. Our parenting must be delivered with authenticity. The general message MUST be that we really do love parenting. Enjoy it. Take pleasure in it. Find joy and beauty and soak up the gifts. Be in a place of gratitude and feel blessed. Really be present and be able to look back and say we were there and didn't miss out! Learn from it. Grow from it. See your childrens' gifts and help them grow their potential. Connect deeply with them on a personal level.

Enjoy parenting, don't be a victim of it. We know we are to extend a loving energy to them in everything we do, in how we guide them, in the choices that we make for them and with them. To be in a mode of Love rather than one of fear, control, bribery, manipulating, yelling, all the tools of the mainstream parenting that are really fear-based instead of truly loving them and guiding them. This is what we have to teach ourselves, and learn and share with others.

But sometimes there are moments – days, weeks, or even months – when that's totally NOT the way we are. Or it's not available to us. We can hold a lot of anger and frustration. We can be on the edge of losing it sometimes! But just like we tell our children, behavior is a result of choice. And you can ALWAYS choose better. Better than yesterday. Better than five minutes ago. Better than five years ago. It's never too late. You may have blown your cool, but you haven't *blown it*. Not yet. There's still time. And it will take time.



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We must acknowledge our mistakes (and -gulp- apologize to our children for them), but we don't live in those mistakes. We move on to better parenting. Positive Parenting.

Because we're the adults.

Because WE can.

And because they can't.

But they will.

They will learn from us something far better than how to keep their elbows off the table. They will learn how to be better than the day before. And there is no lesson greater. Sure there's stress, in one format or another. NO is still painful, both for them and for us. But we can overcome that! We must. We all must. It's life.

And so, I come out of my hiding. One day, maybe my children will be struggling with their own offspring. I hope they come across this article. Because I'm re-entering that warzone that used to be the Living Room. And I'm going to show them how to win, succeed, and move forward in life.

-Ronald "Trillo" Ross III