

[00:00:01.390] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast, where we offer resources to equip you and stories to inspire you on your adoption journey. I'm Lisa Qualls,

[00:00:10.310] - Melissa Corkum

and this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it. And we're here for you.

[00:00:18.630] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, friends, welcome to episode 180 of The Adoption Connection Podcast. Before Lisa and I were podcasters, we were actually bloggers. And for the last couple of years, my blog actually consisted of a lot of video trainings that I had created for a specific Facebook community. So we are spending some time on the podcast this year, giving you access to some of our old blog and video training content. The video I want to play back for you today is about mistakes parents make when giving consequences. We know a lot of you are dealing with some pretty big behaviors. So before I go ahead and hit the replay button, I wanted to remind you that we do monthly behavior Q&As inside our membership community called The Village. If you don't know about the Village, we invite you to check out theadoptionconnection.com/village. We would also like to give you a discount on your first month as a valued podcast listener, so make sure you use the code podcast when you join.

[00:01:31.090] - Melissa Corkum

So today I wanted to talk a little bit about an experience we had recently with our son because I am right here with you. And I'm going to give you the top five mistakes that parents often make when they're using consequences. And these are all things that I have done in the last week. And this situation has to do with our youngest teen, our 13 year old. Years ago, we discovered that he had a propensity for getting up in the middle of the night and helping himself to candy and soda around the house, specifically, in my parents' apartment. We live with them, so he would sneak into their apartment and steal their stuff because I really don't keep a ton of that kind of stuff around in the house. So anyway, I thought we had really not had to deal with stealings. Stealing is one of the things that of all the crazy stuff our kids had done, I hadn't really had to deal a lot with that. And then a couple of years ago, that kind of all fell apart. So we put up the cameras and all the things and things in place, and we thought we had gotten a hold of it. Well, recently, over the past I would say maybe like two weeks, we started noticing that our son was reverting back to some of his old habits of helping himself to things that he really shouldn't be. And we couldn't quite figure out what was going on when exactly was happening, but we were finding candy wrappers and things like that where they shouldn't be. So it kind of all came to a head on Tuesday night, I came home and our older daughter had put him to bed, and I went in and say Goodnight and we discovered some stuff in his bed. More stuff. Soda bottles, candy wrappers, a lot more volume that told us that this has actually been going on pretty consistently and for a much longer time than we had been aware of. I just had the immediate reaction that you might have had, right? There was a lot of yelling, a lot of "we're so disappointed in you," a lot of shame inducing things. We were just so dumb. It was like kind of the straw that broke the camel's back, right? Hopefully some of you guys understand where we were coming from. My immediate response was to be like, well, okay, so first of all, it also came out that he had been stealing from Church. So that hits a nerve. That is really not okay. Not that any stealing is okay, but for some reason, that is really not okay. Right. So I immediately broke out with like, you're never going to Church with Nana and Pops again. You're never going to Bible study again. You're never going to eat any candy ever again. You're never going to leave my sight or Dad's sight ever again so that we can make sure you're not stealing, right? All the things. And he went to bed pretty much remorseful and feeling pretty terrible about himself. And I went to bed just feeling so fed up and so helpless. There was a part of me that knew that this was going on because he has impulse control issues and executive function issues. He doesn't understand when he's doing an act the implications that it will have later. But I was still so angry about it and so frustrated. So we slept on it and came up with something that is going to work for our family. But what I realized is, what happened was number one, I really forgot in the moment to do what I call reflect and regulate my own self first, right? I was totally in my downstairs brain. I was reactive. I reacted instead of responded. I did everything wrong, right? So the first mistake we make when we're giving a consequence is that we forget to reflect and regulate ourselves first. And the thing is, the stealing thing has been going on for weeks and it would have been okay to address it the next morning. I did not in this particular situation have to address it

right then when I did, which was like at 10:00 at night, not a good idea for anyone, right?

[00:05:13.060] - Melissa Corkum

Number two is, for a moment there, I was addressing our son like he was his chronological age 13. Instead of his emotional and developmental age, which for impulse control is probably closer to like four or five. And emotional regulation age probably closer to eight or nine. And I did not address them like that. And that is not the language I use. We tend to use language like you should know better by now, 13 year olds don't do this. If you keep it up, you're going to end up in jail. All of the things, all the things, all of our worst fears come true.

[00:05:47.170] - Melissa Corkum

So the third thing that we tend to do in these situations is we tend to use punishments instead of support and accommodation. There's always consequences for our actions. So don't let anyone tell you otherwise. But there doesn't always have to be a punishment, right? I was like, you're never going to have candy ever again. Well, that doesn't really help solve the situation, right? It helps me feel better and helps me feel like I have power in the situation. But it's not in the long run, going to stop him from stealing candy. And in fact, it will probably make it worse, right? Because whenever we make something completely off limits, we're almost asking our kids to go there. Instead, we really need to look for how can we support our child based on their developmental and emotional age and their lack of skills and what are their strengths? And so we know for our son, one of his strengths is he is pretty compliant if he's being constantly reminded. We've had other kids that are kind of always defiant, and he's not one of those. So a lot of the things that he does, he wouldn't do if someone was right there saying, like, hey, buddy, remember, don't do that. So we resurrected a lot of our security cameras, two way situations. Because the other thing that I said, which is you will never leave my site or dad's side again, is not actually sustainable because I'm going away next week and my husband is coming with me. So that isn't something we can do. But we can put cameras around and say like, hey, we're going to help keep you accountable, and we can talk to him through these cameras. So if he looks like he's about to do something he's not supposed to do, and he told us when he would do these things, basically when he's left alone, we can kind of step into that. We're also going to not leave him alone as much as possible, and we're going to put the things that might be tempting out of his immediate sight and reach. Obviously, it doesn't stop all of it, but the things that he was taking were pretty quick access, so we don't look for support and accommodations.

[00:07:46.600] - Melissa Corkum

The other thing that we don't do, and usually because we're so angry, is we forget to increase nurture when we increase structure. So the increased structure in our situation is we're going to increase a lot of supervision around him so we can keep him accountable, but we need to increase nurture as well. And so one of the things that we're going to do is start giving him one sweet thing a day so he doesn't feel like he has to steal it all the time. Because it's not easy for me to say yes to sugar to kids with big behavior issues. So I'm going to let that go and we're going to try offering him sweet things more often in a controlled way and rewarding his asking for things. So giving more yeses.

[00:08:25.780] - Melissa Corkum

And then I kind of already mentioned this, but the fifth mistake that we make is that we don't create sustainable situations for ourselves. We get dramatic, right? And we lay down the law and then we realize like, oh, we really can't do that. One of the things I said is, you're never going to Bible study ever again. Well, the fact of the matter is that Bible study for him is a place where he feels loved and accepted, and a lot of really good things for him. And so taking that away really isn't sustainable and it also solves the childcare issue we have in the middle of the week. Anyway, those were the five things.

[00:08:57.290] - Melissa Corkum

So let me just review. We forget to reflect and regulate ourselves first so that we can respond rather than react. We address our child like their chronological age instead of their developmental or emotional age. We use punishments instead of creating support and accommodation. Increasing structure, sometimes we call that four, we forget to increase nurture along with the increased structure. So we have to add that piece. And then five, we create unsustainable solutions for ourselves. And so we need to be careful. Again. If we are responding rather than reacting, that will be

a really good place to start.

[00:09:37.610] - Melissa Corkum

If you are desaling with behaviors like lying, sneaking, stealing, food hoarding, again, we invite you to join us at Behavior Q&A inside the Village and you can find out more about our Village membership at theadoptionconnection.com/village. We will also put a link to that in the show notes. And don't forget to use the code podcast for half off your first month.

[00:10:05.450] - Melissa Corkum

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is @postadoptionresources. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community at theadoptionconnection.com/Facebook.

[00:10:21.290] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you and remember you're a good parent doing good work.

[00:10:28.730] - Melissa Corkum

The music for the podcast is called New day and was created by Lee Roosevere.