



## Getting Kids Ready for the Real World

### What Happens in the Real World

Dr. Joy Carroll, Psychologist

(These topics are addressed more fully in the **Getting Kids Ready for the Real World** classes.)

Our job as parents is to prepare children to excel in the real world by encouraging appropriate and responsible behavior as a means of increasing self-confidence and self-esteem. Children base their behavior and beliefs on the messages, choices and consequences they experience in childhood.

When caring affirmation and appropriate boundaries are not offered by parents, teachers and others, children develop a false sense of how the real world functions. An unhealthy sense of entitlement, insecurity, and need for control can develop coupled with the belief that rules and consequences are not personally applicable. This distorted view can negatively impact the ability to maintain relationships, make wise choices, develop a positive self-concept, and experience joy. Adult functioning can also be dramatically impacted in terms of future work and relationship success.

Children constantly do “research” about how the world operates. It is healthy and normal for children to do this.

Important facts about how children conduct their research:

- ★ At times, they do whatever it is we ask them not to do in order to see what happens. This is called limit testing.
- ★ The data they collect from our responses helps them form conclusions about rules.
- ★ They get answers to important research questions:
  - What’s really O.K.?
  - Do adults and others really mean what they say?
  - Who’s really in charge?
  - How far can I go?
  - What happens when I go too far?

Children formulate important conclusions based on their research that shape the way they respond to stressful and challenging situations. Our parenting classes are based on the premise that preparation for a fulfilling adulthood begins in childhood. The techniques presented in these classes are geared toward effectively equipping children for the challenges of the real world.

To help children develop these important skills, it is important to understand what happens in the real adult world:

- ★ If you make poor choices, including the choice to disobey rules and laws, there will be consequences.
- ★ If you act irresponsibly or fail to respect the rights of others, you may lose privileges.

- ★ If you don't do your job or do it poorly, you could lose the job and privileges associated with it.
- ★ There are tangible and intangible rewards for appropriate behavior and a job well done.
- ★ If you act in a disrespectful manner toward others—especially those in authority, you may incur imposed limits and /or lose privileges and important relationships.
- ★ If you are inappropriate with your anger, consequences can include loss of important relationships, loss of jobs, and/or imposed limits.