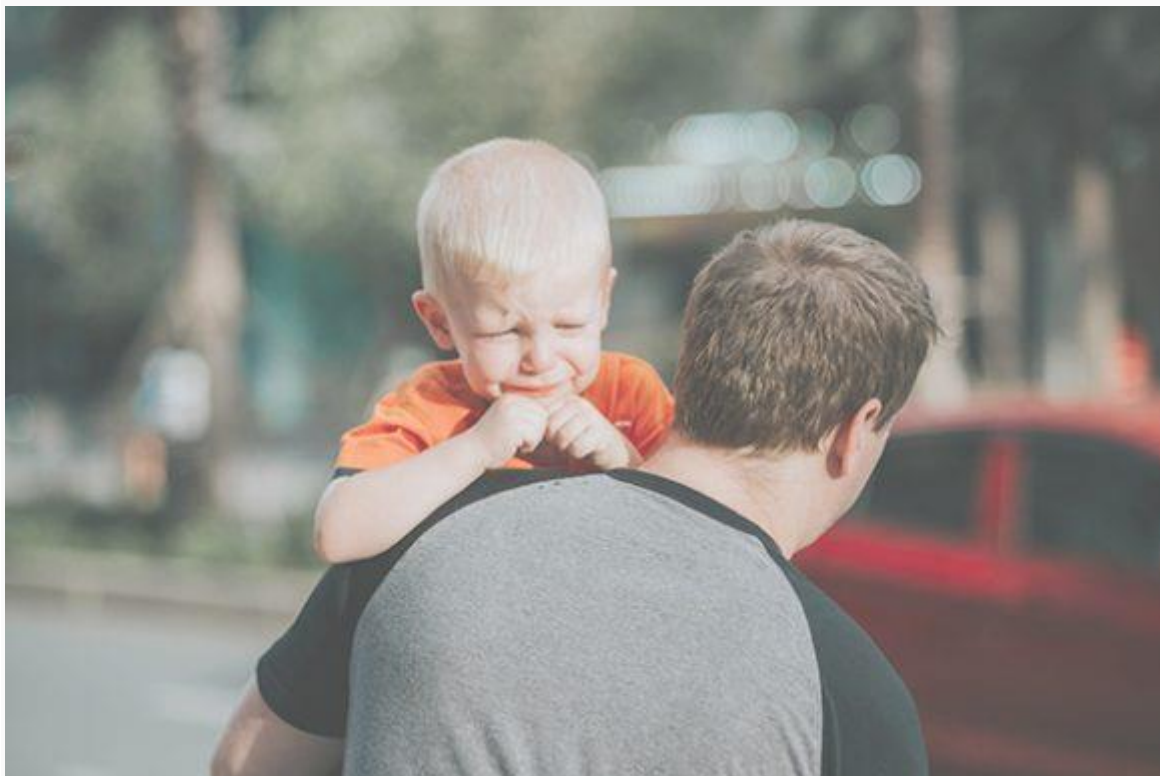




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In the heat of a parenting moment

• POSITIVE PARENTING



by Michael Grose

We all do and say things in the heat of the moment that in retrospect make us cringe. That make us go "*What on earth was I thinking?*". That fill us up with regret. Here's a case in point.

Recently, a parent told her five year old daughter that her bedroom was so messy that the tooth fairy wouldn't be visiting. Miss 5 just folded her

arms and jutted her jaw in defiance, indicating exactly what her mother could do with this tidy bedroom business!

And so the tooth fairy took one look at a messy bedroom and flew on by.

Next morning there was quite a scene when Miss 5 saw her tooth still in the cup, and worse still, no money beside it.

Distressed, she came to her mum in tears. "Mummy, I'll clean my room up, I promise. Will the tooth fairy visit tonight?"

This is where a difficult situation took a turn for the worse.

Miss 5's mother took the hard-nosed approach. *"The tooth fairy only makes one visit for each tooth. You've missed out! Bad luck."* Needless to say Miss 5 was inconsolable. Her mum had fun getting her to school that day!

For parents, it's a struggle sometimes to know what to say and do to get kids to cooperate. A lot of it is trial and error. Over time, you get a better feel for what works and what doesn't and will learn how to get to a peaceful resolution... eventually.

What would you have done?

Would you have banned the tooth fairy? For kids, some things are extremely near and dear to them and should be left out of the consequences or punishment basket.

Christmas, Easter, birthdays, tooth fairies, imaginary friends and the like shouldn't be tinkered with. There is a fantasy, a magic about them that only children get. Yes, there's that thing that Santa only visits kids who behave. But, let's face it, that doesn't wash with most kids any more.

This parent had a 'get out of jail' card

Miss 5's mum had a chance in the morning to let her daughter off the hook, and letting them both save face by taking a "*Okay, if you clean up your room today, I'm sure the tooth fairy will fly by again and notice that you've made an effort*" approach.

But in the cold light of day, she still took the 'tough love' option.

When responses work well – the '4 R test'

So how can you tell if the situation calls for tough love or a softer touch? One way to check is with the Parenting Ideas 4 R test. That is, would your response clear these four criteria?

Related – Does the punishment fit the crime?

Respectful – Does it let the child keep their dignity?

Reasonable – Would an outsider consider it 'reasonable'?

Repeatable – Could you say it again and be sure it will have a positive impact?

It's best to check your responses and see if they pass the 4 R test. If not, then leave them out of your repertoire, as it's a fair chance that they will be ineffective at best, or lead to an even more resentful child at worst.

For parents, it's a struggle sometimes to know what to say and do to get kids to cooperate. A lot of it is trial and error. Over time, you get a better feel for what works and what doesn't and will learn how to get to a peaceful resolution... eventually.

On your journey to finding out what works, it's best to leave some touchy areas such as tooth fairies alone.

Logical, considered and dispassionate consequences are the safest, sanest and most effective parenting tools to reinforce responsible behaviour, while helping you build a positive relationship with your young one.

Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's the author of 10 books for parents including *Thriving!* and the best-selling *Why First Borns Rule the World* and *Last Borns Want to Change It*, and his latest release *Spoonfed Generation: How to raise independent children*.

