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GENTLE PARENTING COMES OF AGE

Over the past year, the concept of gentle parenting or authoritative parenting has been discussed everywhere from the television show *The View* to the pages of *The New Yorker* magazine.

Gentle parenting is a blanket term referring to parents who have moved away from rewards and punishment to affect their children's behavior and instead choose, "connection, communication, and other democratic methods to make decisions together as a family." (Kimberly Zapata, *Parents* magazine)

"A key component to gentle parenting is to recognize that sometimes children communicate their needs through attention-seeking behavior. It's up to the parent to uncover this unmet need beneath the behavior."

- Leslie Priscilla Arreola-Hillenbrand, certified parenting coach



Threats and rewards don't help a child to understand why their behavior is wrong, so they are more likely to repeat the same behavior time after time. An authoritative parenting approach helps the child better process their behavior so they can begin to hold themselves accountable for the things they do and the ways their actions affect others.

The more thoughtful nature of gentle parenting helps to create a child-parent bond built on respect and trust, which allows children to gradually grow more confident in their own abilities to navigate the world without negative course correction.

We are seeing the gentle parenting movement reflected in children's media as well. In a show like *Bluey*, "kids' feelings are recognized and respected, while the kids learn to empathize with adults". (Oliver Franklin-Wallis, *GQ* Magazine)

Understanding how parenting is changing and what parents' expectations are for their children, can help family focused brands build better connections with caregivers. It is also key to helping us understand how children's opinions and voices are influencing family decision making.

Over the past decade children have gained an immense amount of influence over the brands families buy, the vacations they take, even the car they choose. Looking past the myths and jibes that are often associated with gentle parenting and understanding the fundamental truths behind the connections parents are trying to create with their family is core to communicating with these parents and children in a meaningful way.

