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## GUEST COLUMNIST

# Resources to boost your parenting skills

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The sign on our display table reads *Positive Discipline A-Z*. Parents flocked over. "Wow, do I need this!" they decree. Dr. Jane Nelson, who wrote the book by that title, is a long-trusted

► *There is so much we can learn about the children in our lives, and how to better foster their physical, emotional and social development.*

expert on parenting tools. Without being a pushover, Dr. Nelson advises parents against negative reinforcement, aka punishment. "Children do better when they feel better," she explains.

After all, who feels better after they've been punished?

After the moping and crying, children are at a lower level emotionally than when the punishment was doled out. Harsh words, criticisms, raised voices, even time outs, are experienced as punishment.

Nelson reminds us of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—that all of us, especially children, strive to "belong." It is the most basic human need. Children need reassurance that they belong to their parents and family—and that they are not at risk of being cut off from our love, protection or physical closeness.

Regardless of a child's age, Dr. Nelson explains that most of children's

undesired behaviors result from the feeling "disconnected." This can be disconnected from a parent, a sibling, friend, a teacher, etc. "Connect before you correct," Nelson advises. Reassure your children that, just because you are not pleased with their actions, you always love and care about them.

*Stop Negotiating With Your Teen*, by Dr. Janet Sasson Edgette, is another great read. She helps parents balance "limit setting and flexibility, compassion and accountability." When setting limits, ask your teen for potential solutions to the problem at hand. Children who are heard, even though you do not enact their solution, are more likely to accept your consequences as being

Elizabeth Pantley's *The No Cry Discipline Solution* also comes highly recommended, especially for parents of younger children. There are perhaps thousands of other trusted parenting tools I could recommend. But the point is, there is so much each of us can learn about the children in our lives and how to better foster their physi-

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