



About Melinda Moats

Child & Family Therapist

For more information visit:
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Email questions to
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As a parenting expert, Melinda can specifically address your questions and provide detailed solutions.

Melinda has a Masters in Education in Counseling and is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with the state of Washington.

Melinda has over 19 years of experience as a Child and Family Therapist, 14 years teaching parenting classes, and 27 years as a parent.

Melinda Moats is the creator and facilitator of Illuminated Parenting.

This program is in response to requests for a comprehensive seminar to help parents understand themselves and how to raise their children with a strong heart, a clear mind, and a resilient spirit.

These seminars are appropriate for parents with kids of all ages.

Thank You for Downloading The Think Out.
Want more parenting tips? Join our E-Newsletter!

The Think Out parenting tool is a method that will help make lasting changes in your child's actions. Rather than a time-out, a child is required to take a **Think-Out**. In the beginning it may take a little more effort than typical methods of punishment, but if you are consistent, in the short run it will alleviate frustration and produce lasting changes.

I hope you find this information as useful as the many parents before you have. It's a wonderful tool for making real change when you are stuck in a rut, nagging your kids, or always repeating yourself.

Consequences That Count

Figuring out how to discipline our children can sometimes get overwhelming. When parents are at a loss for consequences that work, they will often get caught up in the typical punishments of taking away electronics, such as phones, computers, games, iPods, etc.

However, this type of punishment does not make for lasting changes in behavior.

Some children seem to buck up and take whatever you want to dish out, pretending they don't care. Or maybe they know that if they wait a little while, then you'll change your mind and let them have their electronics back.

Even if they are really trying it just doesn't seem to sink in.

Change the Focus

Parents are bewildered that no

matter how much they take away, no matter how long they take it away, the kids seem to repeat the offenses frequently. Quick and easy, it seems like it should do the trick.

However, it's not as quick and easy as it seems because it doesn't work, which requires punishment to be repeated over and over again, on and on and on.

Usually punishments focus on making the offender feel bad and ashamed for their behavior. Given in anger or frustration, everyone feels bad.

A typical time-out is often used to just stew on how mean mom is rather than how the child got into the predicament in the first place.

Additionally, taking something away makes children focus on the lack of something rather than the offense and how to remedy it.

How does a parent get off the merry-go-round or in this case the upset-go-round?

Start Thinking

The key is in engaging your child's brain in the discipline; get them to THINK.

The Think Out method will get your child using their brains and becoming part of the solution, rather than just being told what to do.

THINK OUT Method

This parenting method asks your child to think why their action was wrong and how they will behave differently in the future.

Instead of a time out – ask them to sit someplace quiet and think about the problem.

Why was it wrong? What needs to change? How will they change? Why do they think it happens? What, how, and why questions are valuable tools.

You can use the following guideline –

1 When a problem occurs, first focus on defining the problem to make sure your child understands what was wrong.

If your child has no idea why you can't pull the dog's tail or why they should turn in their homework, it requires you to explain it to them – empathy for the dog, the connection between homework and grades and beyond that the need for good grades.

These are not ideas kids arrive on the planet with. We assume they would know such basic things but we only know it because we have been living life and know the consequences, whether through our own experience or someone else's.

2 Find a quiet place without a TV or other distraction – usually a dining room table or kitchen table. This place needs to be somewhere you can monitor your child and

where there is nothing else for the child to do but the task at hand.

3 Ask your child to think about the problem and how they would do it differently. Clearly identifying the problem is half of the issue, the other half is what to do instead. What would they do differently?

We assume children know exactly what they are doing when in fact they are making decisions without the part of the brain that understands consequences or logic.

The neo-cortex does not begin to develop until age 12 - 14 and does not finish completion until age 22 - 24 or later. Children also have not had much time on the planet to give them the experiences they need to make good decisions.

Therefore, it's helpful to offer up your fully formed neo-cortex and your knowledge from years on the planet. You can define the problem for your child if they are having a hard time figuring it out for themselves and help them with solutions.

4 Don't assume they know why you want them to brush their teeth, not hit their brother, or volunteer to pick up trash at the park.

Why we want our children to follow certain rules is also important. Reasons for the rules we give our children usually fall into 5 categories:

- Safety/Health,
- Values,
- Relationship skills,
- Community
- Education,

Make sure to explain the 'why' to your kids. It's not that you have to explain yourself, but if they understand your reasons they learn more and don't just feel like you lie awake at night thinking of ways to make them miserable.

5 There are three ways for them to give

answers depending on their age.

If very young, then they can give you the answer verbally. If older but not yet writing they can draw a picture, or they can write out their answers.

There is no set time for this process; it is self-timed, taking as much time as they need. If that's 30 seconds or 30 minutes (or longer if you have a stubborn one), it's completely up to the child. *This is topic is covered with more depth in the seminar Parenting Day By Day – The Nuts and Bolts.*

Of course, they have to come up with something that you find reasonable. Small children can probably only do a short time and you'll need to be with them to help them come up with ideas. The older the child the more independently they can come up with their own solutions.

Teach rather than Punish

When possible, it's important to come up with the rules and consequences ahead of time. The objective is learning, not punishing.

Also, keep it out of the emotions. If you are upset, wait until you have taken a few deep breaths and can speak calmly. Consequences should happen logically, without drama, when everyone's brains are functioning.

When adults become upset their lovely fully-formed neo-cortexes go offline, sending logic and reason out the window.

At these times it is easy to say something you don't really mean, sometimes something hurtful that compounds with an already bad situation.

Deep breaths signal the body that the problem is past and your brain begins to function again. When you have calmed down, think about the problem and the potential solutions.

EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of ways your children of varying ages can complete the Think Out exercise.

- » Your 4-year-old can tell you one way he or she will remember to feed the dog.
- » Your 6-year-old can draw you a picture of asking nicely for the toy.
- » Your 10-year-old can write two ways to keep her room clean.
- » Your 13-year-old can write three ways to remember to do his homework.
- » Your 16-year-old can write a paragraph (or a whole paper) on how to be more respectful.

Then with a smile in your heart and your best teaching hat on, talk with your child and set their minds to work to solve the problem.

I know this may seem like more work on your part and in some ways you are putting more energy into this technique in the beginning. But when you begin to get the change you are looking for, you save mountains of time that were spent frustrated, angry, nagging, and repeating yourself.

Also, the Think Out method works best when all caretakers are using this technique or at least following the same rules and consequences.

The joy of a child that 'gets it' and actually begins to do things differently is a wonderful reward.

Additional Parenting Help

Melinda Moats, M.Ed. is now offering online parenting webinars!

Sometimes kids are defiant and refuse to follow through on consequences. This is a topic that is covered in the Think Out webinar, which covers the Think Out method in more detail among other topics and provides an opportunity to have your specific questions answered. Check out melindamoats.com to see when the next Illuminated Parenting Webinars are being offered.

The following is a brief summary of the online webinars that are currently available.

Five Steps to a Happier Family: Five simple steps for making lasting change. Solve long standing problems, get out of repeating yourself and find solutions unique to your family. Each webinar has opportunities for a questions and answers.

The Think Out: Learn more about implementing the Think Out and get all your questions answered. How tired are you of trying to figure out logical consequences over and over again? Have you taken away everything and still your child won't change? Or they behave for a while but fall back into bad habits? This webinar offers a unique way to solve these problems. There is time for question and answer so we can look at specific examples.

Lighten-Up Parenting Forum: An opportunity to 'call in' with your particular parenting questions, listen to other parents and get expert advice on solving family dilemmas.

I always appreciate hearing what is interesting to you and what topics you would like to have covered. I would love to hear from you on any topic you would like covered or questions that you have.

Email me at info@illuminatedparenting.com. Be sure to check out our website, IlluminatedParenting.com and our Facebook page (facebook.com/IlluminatedParenting/) for more parenting tips, blog posts, and the latest dates of our webinars.

Remember to keep it light!