



Why We Love and Hate Our Children

Lesson 2

Parental Ambivalence

- All parents have mixed feelings toward themselves and toward their children.
- The more parents try to cover up or deny their negative feelings, the more these feelings may come out in their behavior.



Parental Ambivalence

- **Negative feelings toward our children do not negate the positive feelings we have toward them.**
- **All feelings are acceptable...
when they don't lead to destructive actions.**



Intention:



**Be aware of critical thoughts
toward yourself and your
children.**

Where do these critical attitudes come from?



Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**



What is a Fantasy Bond?

- An imaginary connection or fantasy of love and closeness that replaces genuine, love, affection and regard between parent and child
- An illusion of fused identity between parent and child
- A destructive codependency between parent and child that limits the child's personal freedom

Why We Form a Fantasy Bond

The fantasy bond is a **core defense** a person forms under stress in an attempt to cope with:

- Separation anxiety
- Emotional and physical deprivation
- Lack of real love or nurturance in early life
- Existential fears





The Fantasy Bond

For a child:

- The fantasy bond starts in infancy when a child fantasizes of being merged with the mother.





The Fantasy Bond

For a child:

- The child creates a fantasy, identifying with the parent or internalizing them, becoming parent and child all in one.





The Fantasy Bond

For a child:

- In later years, the child learns to self-parent.





The Fantasy Bond

For a child:

- Like an addiction, the fantasy bond may provide temporary relief, but ultimately creates more feelings of hunger, desperation and maladaptation.

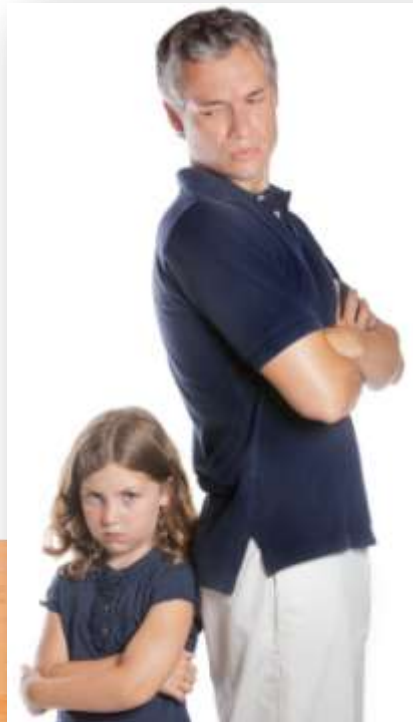




The Fantasy Bond

For a child:

- The degree of reliance on the fantasy bond is proportional to the amount of pain or frustration they experienced.





The Fantasy Bond

For a parent:

- **Parents extend their fantasy bonds to their kids.**





The Fantasy Bond

For a parent:

- They see their children as an “immortality project” - want them to replicate or “save” them.





The Fantasy Bond

For a parent:

- **Some parents reverse roles - turn to their children for security and comfort and expect the child to meet their needs (“emotional hunger”).**





The Fantasy Bond

For a parent:

- Some look to their children to fulfill their dreams and desires, sometimes giving up on their own lives.






The Fantasy Bond

For a parent:

- **Some treat children the way they were treated or listen to a critical inner voice that coaches them on how to parent.**





The fantasy bond, though an attempt to answer a very human need for safety and security, fosters an illusion of connection and oneness, which has a devastating effect on individuals, their relationships and their children.

- From *Compassionate Child Rearing*



**Can you find examples of a
fantasy bond in your relationship
with your child?**

Emotional Hunger

- **Can you recall your parents being overprotective or intrusive? Did their treatment of you make you feel that you were more helpless or incompetent than you really were at that age? Describe your reactions.**
- **Did your parents try to get comfort from you when you were a child? Did one of them seek you out as a confidant or special companion and leave the other parent out? How did you feel?**



Emotional Hunger

- Did your parent or parents insist that you perform for friends and relatives? How did you feel at those times?
- Did your parent or parents brag excessively to their friends and relatives about your accomplishments (as though your achievements or talent were theirs)? How did you respond?



Why We Idealize Our Parents

- Children may idealize their parents in order to feel safe.
- Instead, they turn on and feel bad about themselves.



*What did I
do wrong?*

Division of the Mind

Parental Ambivalence

Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.

Parental Nurturance



Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility



Prenatal Influences

● Disease/ Trauma



● Substance Abuse/
Domestic Violence



Birth



Trauma



Baby



Genetic
Structure
Temperament
Physicality
Sex



Parental Nurturance

Self-System

- Unique make-up of the individual
- Identification with and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits
- The effect of experience and education



Personal Attitudes/Goals/Conscience

Realistic, Positive Attitudes Toward Self

Realistic evaluation of talents, abilities, etc...with generally positive/ compassionate attitude toward self and others.

Goals

Needs, wants, search for meaning in life

Moral Principles

Behavior

Ethical behavior toward self and others

Goal-Directed Behavior

Acting with Integrity

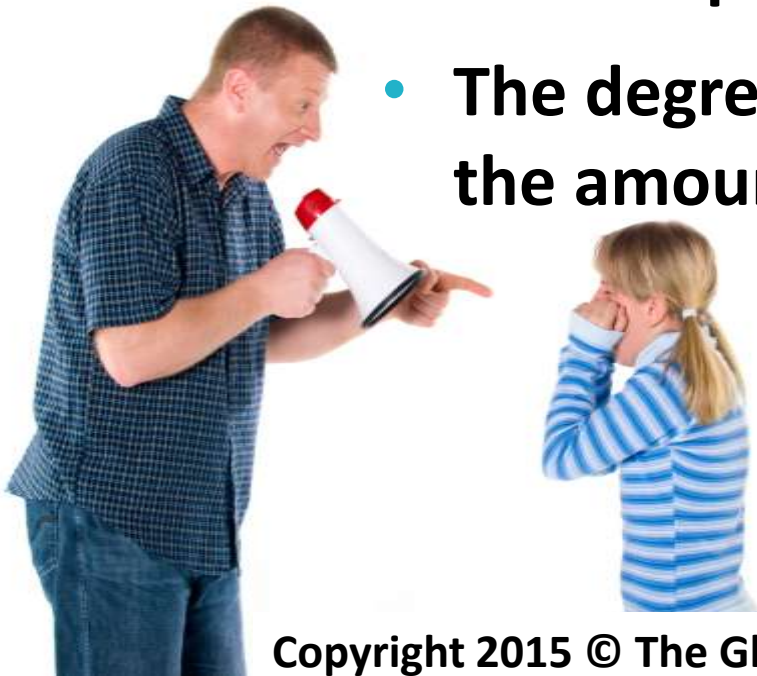


Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility

Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, death anxiety




Anti-Self System

- The Fantasy Bond (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent.
- The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained.








Anti-Self System

Self-Punishing Voice Process

<u>Voice Process</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>	<u>Source</u>
 Self-critical thoughts	Verbal self-attacks – a generally negative attitude toward yourself and others	Critical parental attitudes, projections and unreasonable expectations
 Self-destructive thoughts	Addictive patterns and self-punishing thoughts after indulging	Identification with parents' defenses
 Suicidal thoughts	Jeopardizing actions like carelessness with one's body, physical self-harm and suicide	Parents' covert and overt aggression (identification with the aggressor)

Anti-Self System

Self-Soothing Voice Process

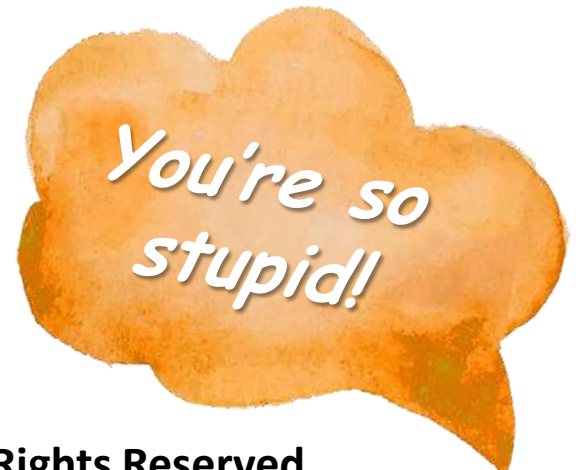
<u>Voice Process</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>	<u>Source</u>
 Self-soothing attitudes	Inwardness, self-limiting or self-protective actions	Overprotection by parents, imitation of their defenses
 Self-aggrandizing thoughts	Building up yourself verbally	Build up from your parents
 Suspicious or paranoid thoughts toward others	Feeling alienated from others, acting destructive toward others	Parental attitudes, child abuse, feelings of being a victim
 Self-sabotaging thoughts	Addictive patterns, thoughts that lure you to indulge	Imitation of parents' defenses
 Violent thoughts	Aggressive actions and actual violence	Parental neglect, parents' overt aggression (identification with the aggressor)

Intergenerational Parenting



Definition of the Critical Inner Voice

- The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.
- The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our dysfunctional behavior.



Definition of the Critical Inner Voice

This internal enemy fosters:

- **Inwardness**
- **Distrust**
- **Self-criticism**
- **Self-denial**
- **Addictions**
- **Retreat from goal-directed activities**



Definition of the Critical Inner Voice

The critical inner voice affects every aspect of our lives:

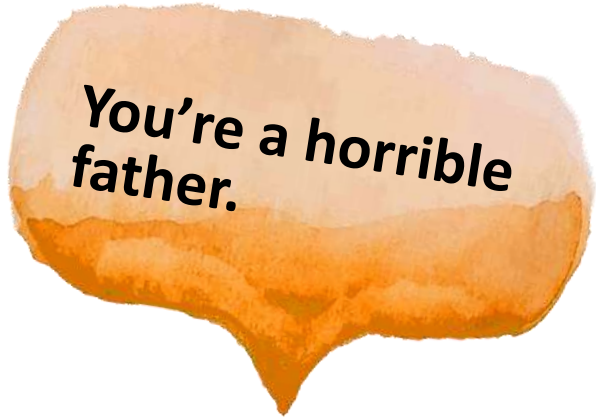
- **Our self-esteem and confidence**
- **Our personal and intimate relationships**
- **Our performance and accomplishments**
- **...and especially our parenting**




Common “Voices” in Parenting




**You don't know
what you're
doing.**



**You're a horrible
father.**



**They're no
good, because
you're no good.**



**Everyone sees
what a bad parent
you are.**

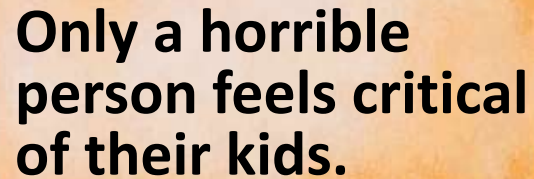


**You're just like
your mother.**

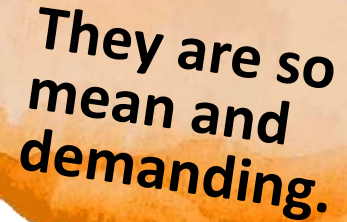
Common “Voices” in Parenting



Having kids
means giving up
your life.



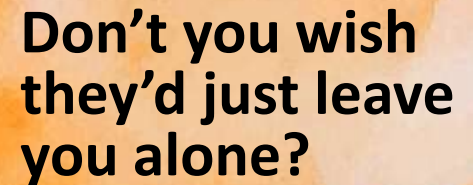
Only a horrible
person feels critical
of their kids.



They are so
mean and
demanding.



You never get a
moment's peace.



Don't you wish
they'd just leave
you alone?

The “Should” Voices in Parenting

(The Negative Coaching)

**You should make
them listen to
you.**

**You should point
out everything they
do wrong.**

**Be different from
your mother.**

**You should be nice
to them.**

**Let them do
what they want.**

The “Should” Voices in Parenting

(The Negative Coaching)

You should make them eat healthy.

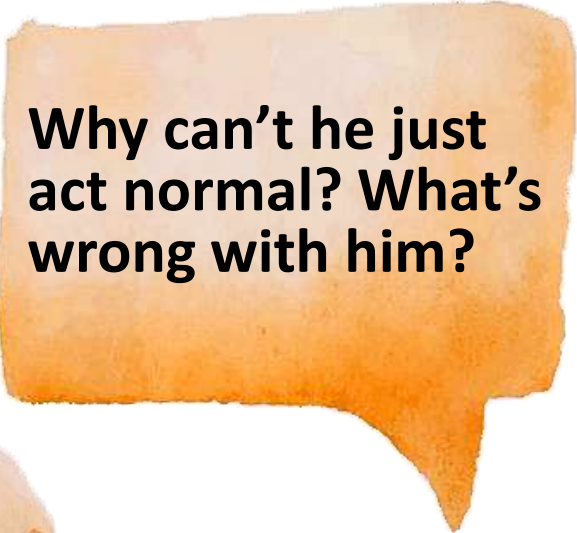
You shouldn't let them get away with that.

You should make them behave.

Critical Inner Voices Toward Our Children



She's so needy!



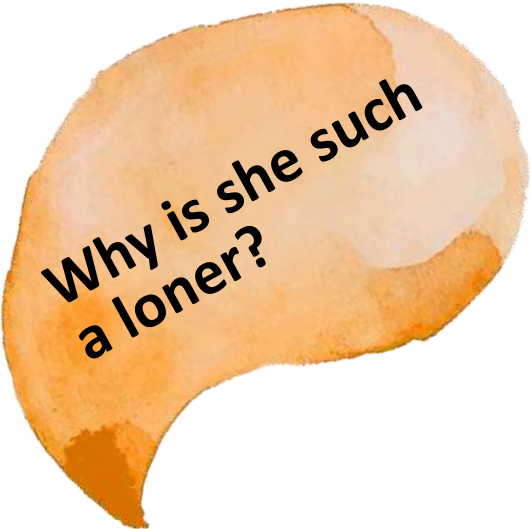
Why can't he just act normal? What's wrong with him?



He's too hyper!



These kids are driving you crazy!



Why is she such a loner?

Children also experience these voices.

**I never know
what to say. I'm
such a loser.**

**No one wants to
be my friend.**



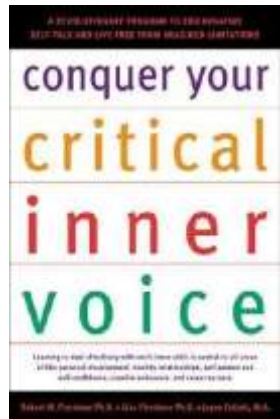
How Voices Pass From Generation to Generation



Copyright 2015 © The Glendon Association All Rights Reserved

The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

From *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*



The frequency with which you experience certain voices on a scale of 0-4:

- ***You don't know how to comfort your baby.***
- ***You're so impatient with kids.***
- ***That kid is just trying to get under your skin.***



Identify Your Critical Inner Voice

- **Recognize events that trigger your inner critic.**
- **Recognize the outside criticisms that support your critical inner voice.**
- **Become aware of times you may project your self-attacks onto others.**
- **Notice changes in your mood.**



Think of Your Inner Critic as an External Enemy

- Change “I” statements to “you” statements.
- This will help separate your inner critic from your real point of view.
- Do your self-critical thoughts remind you of a point of view of someone in your past?

Respond Rationally to Your Inner Critic

**Write down a more compassionate,
realistic view of yourself.**



Examine Your Actions

- **Which actions reflect your real goals and which are dictated by your critical inner voice?**
- **Could your actions be a response to or an imitation of your past?**

