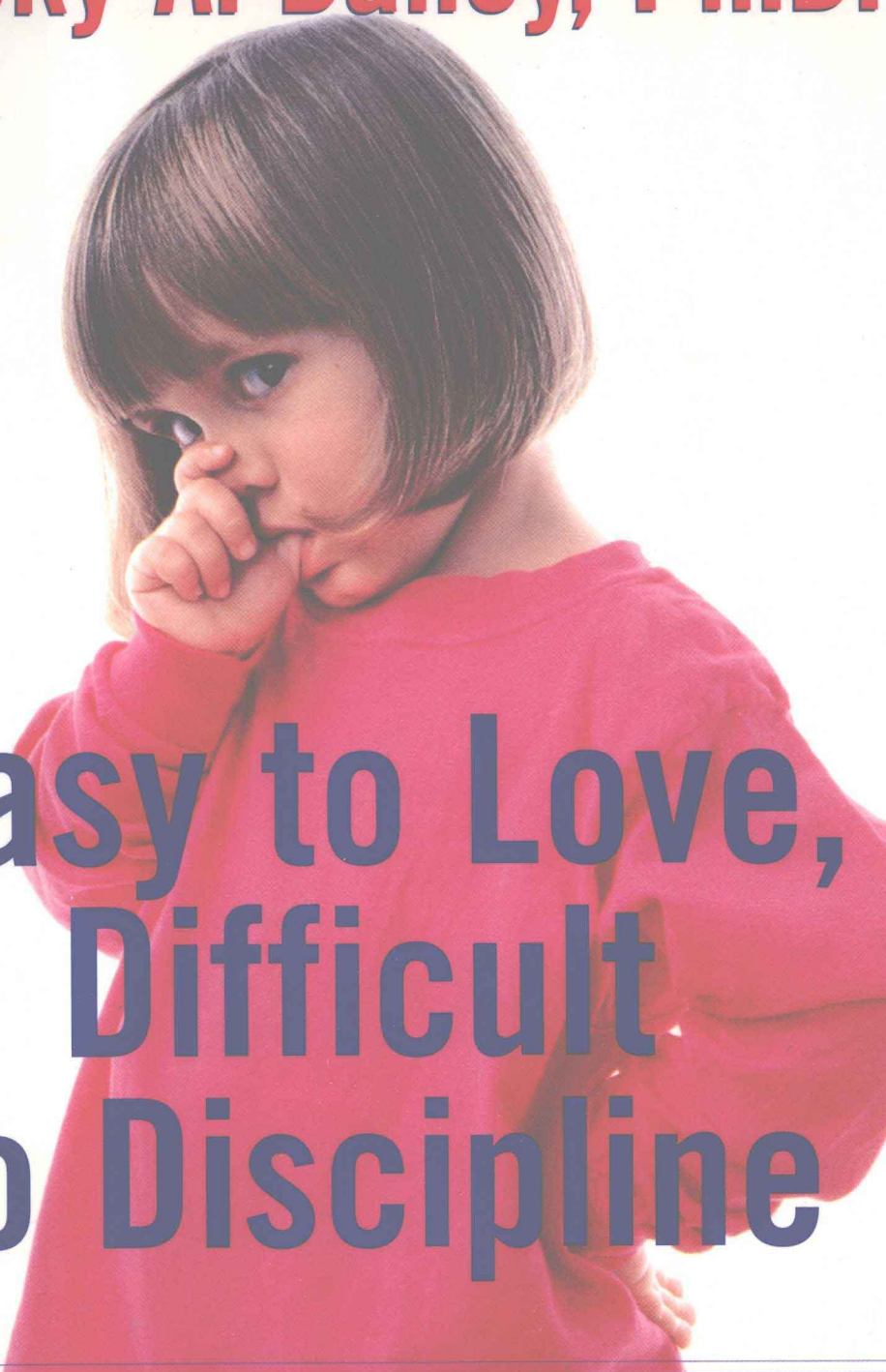


Becky A. Bailey, Ph.D.



**Easy to Love,
Difficult
to Discipline**

**THE 7 BASIC SKILLS FOR TURNING
CONFLICT INTO COOPERATION**

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline



The Seven Basic Skills for Turning
Conflict into Cooperation

Becky A. Bailey, Ph.D.

William Morrow and Company, Inc.
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**Easy to Love,
Difficult
to Discipline**

*This book is dedicated with boundless love and gratitude
to my mom and dad.*

*It is also dedicated to the love between all parents and children.
This love is a gift from the universal power
that unites us all.*

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**Easy to Love,
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From Willful to Willing

*A wonderful woman who lived in a shoe
Had so many children,
And she knew exactly what to do.
She held them,
She rocked them,
She tucked them in bed,
“I love you, I love you”
Is what she said.*

Have you ever thought, I have tried everything possible to get my child to get dressed (or do his homework, or clean his room) and then sadly said to yourself, “I give up”? Have you ever punished your child and later felt guilty for having behaved in a way that you swore you never would? Have you ever promised yourself to exercise regularly, eat better, or spend more time with loved ones, but found that the promises you made to yourself are difficult to keep? Have you then given up, or felt guilty?

I wrote this book to help you permanently change your own behavior, because only by learning to discipline yourself will you be

able to successfully guide your children's behavior. I will show why achieving self-control and self-discipline allows you to know exactly what to do in order to discipline your children.¹

If I asked you to teach a class in nuclear physics, could you do it? Probably not. Could you teach your child how to pole-vault? Again, probably not. You cannot teach what you do not know.

Yet we often demand that children acquire skills that we ourselves lack. We ask children to do as we say, not as we do. Parents yell, "Go to your room until you are in control of yourself." A mother *grabs* a toy that two preschoolers are tussling over and says, "You know better than to grab toys from your friends. It's mine now!" Husbands and wives battle with each other, using attack skills such as name-calling and withdrawal. Then they demand that their children resolve conflicts calmly, by discussing them. Our own emotional intelligence is primitive at best, and whether we admit it or not, we pass our emotional clumsiness on to our children.

For most of us, being consistently in control of ourselves represents a major change. So this book is about change: It's about learning to change your own behavior, and your children's behavior, so that you can grow closer, embrace and resolve conflict, and enjoy life. Once you model self-control for your children, they will show better self-control than you have ever imagined they could achieve. Delightful surprises await you.

Once you model self-control for your children, they will show better self-control than you have ever imagined they could achieve.

Imagine telling your child *one* time to take a shower—and him actually marching off to do it! Imagine promising yourself to either conquer your clutter, or to relax about it—and then keeping your

¹ A note on my use of pronouns: I did not want to refer to your child as "he" throughout this book, but using "he or she" and "him or her" felt awkward. Instead, I alternate the use of masculine and feminine pronouns chapter by chapter. In chapter 1 I use "he" and "him," in chapter 2, "she" and "her," and so on.

promise. This book will help you realize these possibilities and many, many others.

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline can help you become the person you want your child to emulate. It will take your self-discipline and child-rearing skills to new levels. You will learn how to move beyond policing your children with rules and consequences, and discover how to create a home in which healthy relationships flourish and your children voluntarily choose to cooperate.

Sounds impossible? The revised Mother Goose nursery rhyme at the start of this chapter contains all the needed ingredients. If you want your children to change, you must begin by becoming a wonderfully loving adult. You must focus on what you *want* to have happen instead of what you *don't* want. You must rely on love, not fear, to motivate yourself and your children. When you learn to love yourself, you will be ready to teach your children to love themselves and one another.

This is a radically different approach from the one summarized in the original rhyme, which goes like this:

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children
She didn't know what to do.
She gave them some broth
Without any bread;
She whipped them all soundly
And put them to bed.

Have you ever manipulated your child with food like Mother Goose did? (“If you behave while I shop, I’ll take you to McDonald’s.”) Have you ever, in desperation, spanked your child? Unsure of how to proceed, have you sent your child to his room, or put him in “time out”? How often have you felt like the tired “old woman” (or a tired old dad) after surviving a day with your children, fighting battle after battle? The house really can feel as cramped as a shoe with laces tied too tightly.

How would tomorrow feel if you did know what to do? When your children tormented one another, you would be able to teach them how to resolve their conflicts, rather than resorting to playing “bad cop.” When your children refused to clean up, you would know how to help them move past resistance and toward cooperation, rather than turning to nagging, punishment, or doing the task yourself. When your children lost control, you would know how to help them calm down and reorganize themselves, rather than outshouting them. Imagine knowing exactly what to do!

TIMES HAVE CHANGED AND SO MUST WE

When it comes to describing our social situation, “Times have changed” is an understatement. There have been many shifts in our society, yet none so profound as the shift from roles to relationships. Building steam in the late fifties, society began to enter bold new territory. Collectively, we decided that the roles of the past were too limiting. The roles of husband and wife had been explicitly defined. The role of child (to be seen and not heard) and the role of parent (as boss) had been clearly articulated. Relationships were based on these prescribed roles. As long as everyone performed their ordained duties, all was well. Yet in the comfort and safety of these roles, we felt something missing, especially in the case of those who were relegated to the subservient roles. The powerless group (women, people of color, people with disabilities, children) rebelled. Consciousness expanded and people boldly demanded more. We wanted relationships, companions, and closeness based on equality of worth rather than on hierarchical, prescribed roles demarcating the powerful from the powerless. Sadly, however, we did not have the relationship skills or social competence to make these new relationships work. Divorce rates skyrocketed. Businesses instituted shakeups in search of employees who could take more initiative and who had the necessary people skills. Children became demanding, and parents felt at a loss as to how to respond. We placed ourselves on new ground. As we continue to seek meaningful relationships with one another, we

must also learn the skills of interaction that promote respect. We must obtain new tools for new times. *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline* is a skill-based book to help parents build respectful relationships with themselves, with each other, and with their children.

All parents demonstrate or model a code of conduct and a value system. This is done through their day-to-day interactions with others. Until we become conscious of these patterns of interaction, we will not be able to guide the morality of the next generation. Most of us model respect when we are calm and when life is going our way. However, what happens to our values when we are stressed and life becomes complicated? How do we behave when traffic is backed up, when our children forget their permission slips, when our spouse fails to stop by the grocery store again, or when our mother-in-law keeps harping about our parenting choices? What happens to treating each other with respect during these times?

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline relates to us all. Every one of us at times is easy to love, and every one of us at times is difficult to live with. It is easy to love our children when they do what we ask, when we ask. It is easy to love our spouses and partners when we agree on how to raise the children. It is easy to love ourselves when we live up to our personal expectations. This book is about the other times. The times when life does not go as we had planned. When others don't act as we had hoped. And when our own actions are not something we want to write home about.

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline presents a framework of discipline called loving guidance. This framework is built on the premise that how we perceive a situation dictates the actions we will take. In order to change behavior, we must focus on our perceptions as well as on our actions. Loving guidance imbues parents with the *Seven Powers for Self-Control*. These powers are perceptual skills that enable you to become proactive rather than reactive in conflict moments, allowing you to stay in control of yourself and in charge of children.

Self-control must be the first priority of all parents. Self-control is not pretending to be calm in difficult moments. It is the ability to

reach out and empathize with others, to accept and celebrate differences, to communicate feelings directly, to resolve conflicts in constructive ways, and to enjoy feeling close and connected to others. It is the ability to embrace conflict as a teaching opportunity rather than viewing it as a disruption. The *Seven Powers for Self-Control* are ways of perceiving and thinking. If we adopt these ways of seeing difficult times, we remain self-disciplined enough to begin the process of disciplining others. Each of the Seven Powers has a slogan to help you remember to use that particular power in times of conflict. The *Seven Powers for Self-Control* and the slogans that support them are as follows:

1. The Power of Perception: No one can *make* you angry without your permission.
2. The Power of Attention: What you focus on, you get more of.
3. The Power of Free Will: The only person you can *make* change is yourself.
4. The Power of Unity: Focus on connecting instead of trying to be special.
5. The Power of Love: See the best in one another.
6. The Power of Acceptance: This moment is as it is.
7. The Power of Intention: Conflict is an opportunity to teach.

From these *Seven Powers for Self-Control* emerge the *Seven Basic Discipline Skills*. These are the *only* skills you need to constructively respond to any difficult moment. Parents who draw upon the *Seven Powers for Self-Control* and use the *Seven Basic Discipline Skills* create a home that models the *Seven Values for Living*. This will happen automatically. As parents change their attitudes and behaviors, so will their children. Each of the *Seven Basic Discipline Skills* has a slogan to help remind you what you can expect from using the skill. Listed below are the slogans and the values that you will be modeling and teaching your children.

1. Composure: Living the values you want your child to develop. This teaches *integrity*.

2. Encouragement: Honoring children so they will honor you.
This teaches *interdependence*.
3. Assertiveness: Saying no and being heard.
This teaches *respect*.
4. Choices: Building self-esteem and willpower.
This teaches *commitment*.
5. Positive Intent: Turning resistance into cooperation.
This teaches *cooperation*.
6. Empathy: Handling the fussing and the fits.
This teaches *compassion*.
7. Consequences: Helping children learn from their mistakes.
This teaches *responsibility*.

TO DISCIPLINE AND TO TEACH ARE THE SAME ACTS

This book is about parents teaching their children how to behave, not about parents controlling their children's behavior. Discipline situations with children occur over conflicting needs. The conflict may be between adults and children, or between children. You actually teach your child to resolve his own conflicts with the corrective discipline tools that you use. Your discipline tools evolve into the interpersonal skills your children adopt and then carry with them into all their future relationships. When you look at discipline in this way, you can see that your guidance system involves much larger issues than getting your children to finish their chores or go to bed on time. Your approach to discipline demonstrates conflict resolution for your children, and it teaches them how to get their needs met for the rest of their lives.

Through discipline, you teach your children how to resolve the conflicting needs of different people.

Adults are wracked by conflicts. These conflicts can be within ourselves, with a spouse, or between neighbors or countries. The divorce rate today is about 50 percent. In the twentieth century, warfare has