

Numbers

By Nancy Mann

I don't care for numbers. Numbers are used in counting, and are often applied in evaluating a child's conduct, or meting out a child's discipline.

A parent might yell "I'm counting to 3-starting right now...and you have to quit doing what you are doing...1...2...3..." Imagine this for a little, active boy, boisterous and exuberant... who is totally immersed in seeing what happens when he puts toilet paper rolls into a bucket of water- they get squishy and soggy so fast! Or, imagine hearing this counting for a little boy with ADHD, who is not really associating his activity with a rule or prohibition previously and casually given. He may not actually hold the rules in his mind, studies show.

Or, for example, a mother might commonly yell "How many times have I told you not to..." fill in the blank. Or, "This is the 5th time you have slammed the door on the cat ..."

When a child gets grounded, the number of hours, or even days, seems insurmountable ...ie. 10 squares on that calendar ...before the skating party...10 days to sit in a room-it's cruel-it's over-punishment- and it's not doable! Surely, resentment builds in about ...2...minutes!

A "time-out" should be 1minute for every year of the child's age-2 minutes on time-out for a 2-year-old, 3 minutes for a 3 year-old, etc. But often, this seems like nothing for an adult, and they extend it to 10 minutes, while they chat on their cell phones, or shop on-line ...leaving the child believing that his or her life has totally ended. Numbers for time and minutes of time are so relative. This is not to say that this disciplined child will end up on a chain gang, but when that parent later calls for him to come in the house "In 1minute! This very minute," the time calculation will be figured on the child's perception of what 1minute is...remembering the times he sat so lonely in his or her little chair, and was completely ignored.

And, people make a mental note of what amounts are the norm and are appropriate ...dining at Country Buffet, an on-looker might say quietly ... "That man has made 3 trips to the salad bar...", not knowing that the man had been on a tour in Kuwait for 18 months and not tasted salad, iceberg lettuce, cucumbers, or anything green for those months-just tins of food called K-rations in World War II.

Once, I heard of an older, single woman who lived in Windsor gardens and was looking for a male companion . She would get all dolled up and set her hair, and go to a nice restaurant on a Friday or Saturday night. She would spot a gentleman, sitting alone at a table and commence to stare at him. She would stare and stare. Finally, she would get up from her chair, cross the floor and stand right beside his table . He would inevitably look up. She would then say (using numbers to trick him into conversation) "I am sorry I have been staring at you, but you look so much like my 5th husband ..." The man would say, astonished ... "How many times have you been married?" And she would answer, with a soft, sly smile "4," and sit right down!