

# Keeping Thy Mouth Shut

Dr. Dale Simpson

Probably the hardest thing for a parent to do is be quiet. You know, the ability to have a flood of emotions inside and yet look at your child and maintain a few moments of silent reflection.

All too often, we see or hear of something about our child that causes us to raise our voice, ask intense questions, rant and rave, or give wonderfully useless lectures. Why do we do these things in the face of the moment? We do them because a feeling is triggered deep within us and our defenses mechanisms kick in. What are these feelings and what are defense mechanisms?

First, defenses are thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that try to protect us from feeling something that we want to avoid. Defenses keep us from feeling something true in us that feels too uncomfortable to face. It can be faced. It is not a monster. Our defenses don't know that.

The feelings that get tapped are in the area of fear, sadness, guilt, anger, and rejection. These must be controlled at that critical moment so we don't panic and say or do things out of feelings rather than reflection. We often find ourselves doing and saying things before we know we're doing it. This is never good.

Parenting out of fear or anger or guilt feelings will not be good parenting. Start asking yourself what feelings must be under your reactions to your children. Helplessness is a common one. By nature, we want to have power when we feel powerless. This finds us cranking up the volume or the threats. As children age, they learn to defeat these fearful attempts by their parents to get power when we feel powerless. The children, if they are worth their salt at all, will find a way to defeat your bad parent moves that are born out of fear or helplessness.

So head out on your journey to find out what is under you reactions that you regret. Hunt down that feeling in you and ask God for some new perspective on what to do with it. In all likelihood, what you are doing (if it is reactive) is not helping. God will give you some way to surprise your child with a different response; one born of security and love. See you on the journey beneath the defenses. Let's see if we can keepeth our mouths shut for just a moment.

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Dale Simpson, PhD, is the father of five grown children. As a practicing psychologist for more than 36 years, he has counseled children, teens, adults and couples and is currently practicing in Venice, Florida. Dr. Simpson was a co-founder and publisher of Homeschooling Today Magazine, wrote a column called Inside the Family for the magazine, served as a featured speaker at numerous state homeschooling and parenting conferences, and is the publisher of Learning for Life Press. A Study in Wisdom, Homeschooling for Life, The Easy to Make Paper Airplane Book, and the **Think It, Feel It, Say It Board Game** are published by Learning for Life Press. Sign up for our free newsletter and also drop by for free articles on family life. [www.learningforlifepress.com](http://www.learningforlifepress.com)

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