



Parenting Tip

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Kids Struggle in Different Ways

Some children struggle with things externally, acting out, getting in trouble at school or with the law, and disobeying their parents. Through these actions they often learn valuable life lessons. It's not the best way to learn, and the experiences they face are often unforgiving and painful.

Other children may conform to the rules outwardly, but inside they're wrestling just as fervently—and significantly—as the outwardly rebellious child. They mull things over and make wishes and longings. The actions may look different, but the heart-struggle is the same.

The story of the prodigal son, found in Luke 15:11-32, illustrates this well. While the focus is on the rebellious younger brother in the parable, we get a glimpse into the internal struggles of the seemingly compliant older brother. Both brothers had heart problems. They just dealt with them in different ways.

Some parents spend a lot of energy trying to help the prodigal and not as much on the child who conforms outwardly. Both need help. Sometimes the child who appears to be compliant requires more attention and care, because the lessons he needs won't be learned from an external crisis. The quieter child may have internal crises that eventually come out, but they usually take a lot longer to develop.

The best solution for both kinds of children is to address life on a heart level. The heart is where we wrestle with things so understanding what the child meditates on, what the child values, and what the child longs for, are all keys to where the child might be struggling. Parenting on a heart level is not easy, but it's worth the extra work in the end.

This parenting tip is taken from the book, [Parenting is Heart Work](#) by Dr Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.

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