

Growing Concerns
A question and answer column with Dr. Marti Erickson
www.MomEnough.com

Question: I have two children, ages 10 and 2. For years I have been inundated with people telling me, “Just wait until he reaches the terrible two’s” or “those awful teenage years are just around the corner.” These folks offering unsolicited advice truly irritate me. It never has turned out nearly as bad as they claim it will, and often times my kids’ stages are better than I expected. How can I best reply to people who continue to say, “Just wait!”

Answer: You sound like you have a very positive attitude about your children’s stages of development and, apparently, realistic expectations about the usual ups and downs of childhood. How nice for you and your children that things usually go even better than you expect!

Unsolicited childrearing advice, or warnings about the challenges ahead, really don’t demand a response. A simple “hmmm” or “interesting” might suffice. But if you think a more elaborate response is in order, here are a few remarks that will acknowledge the person’s concern while still holding the line about what you feel about your children’s behavior and development:

- “I find it a fascinating adventure to see the different stages my kids go through on their way to growing up. Sometimes it’s hard and sometimes it’s easy, but it’s always interesting.”
- “You know, I always expect that kids will go through some tough times, so it’s a nice surprise when a stage is easier than I expected.”
- “I remember how hard it was sometimes to be a child. No wonder kids sometimes give us adults a rough time.”
- “I’m glad to know that if my kids are difficult at that age, I can turn to you for support.”

Or you might even just turn the focus back onto your advice-giving friend by saying:

- “I’m really sorry to hear it was such a hard time for you when your child was that age. I hope you had good friends to support you!”

(By the way, if you and your children manage to sail through the toddler period and the teen years without any major hassles, maybe you’d like to apply for my job! Meanwhile, keep up the good work.)

Copyright 2002
Marti Erickson, Ph.D.