

CHILDREN MAKE MISTAKES

A mistake is any behavior that causes deterioration in the quality of one's life! Sometimes the undesired outcome is immediately evident, as when you hit your thumb with a hammer. That behavior is generally recognized as ill advised rather quickly while at other times an undesired outcome can take a long time to materialize, as with cigarette smoking.

Human beings are born with an internal guiding device designed to create a life of satisfaction and enjoyment. Every behavior is automatically evaluated in terms of whether it brought pain or pleasure. Behaviors that bring pain are not generally repeated; though, admittedly, there may be a few slow learners among us! But it would require a mental illness to cause a person to repeatedly choose behavior that brought us PAIN! For instance, how many times have you stuck your finger into a wall outlet?

We begin life as a helpless infant and our earliest attempts to gain personal satisfaction are poorly conceived and impulsively implemented. Those poorly conceived and impulsively implemented behaviors are usually done in the general company of adults (parents) who are supervising the infant.

And sometimes these behaviors cause inconvenience or distress or even PAIN to those adults. Until we have matured and developed to the point of understanding the nature of all behavior (subject to pleasure principle), parents have a tendency to become angry when inconvenienced or in PAIN. Angry parents can be damaging to infants.

As children begin life, they see their parents as Gods. After all, the parents are, relatively, HUGE. Additionally, they can read minds, predict the future, see through walls, have eyes in the back of their heads and can understand mysterious forces that baffle a small child. And they have the power of life and death over the small child. Having God be angry with us when we are small can be pretty frightening and makes a big impression that we don't quickly forget. An angry God who makes negative demeaning statements about who we are is really big stuff!

The combination of a critical angry God at a time when we realize that we've made a mistake can be devastating. In fact, a child who has just made a mistake is very much in need of a forgiving tolerant God. (Perhaps we all are!)

Having a tolerant and forgiving parent doesn't necessarily mean that mistakes don't have a consequence. They do. God may forgive us for hitting our thumb with a hammer but that doesn't mean that our thumb doesn't hurt! Children can be held accountable for their mistakes without being demeaned or devalued. It may not be easy for a frustrated parent to watch their tone, but it is important. A demeaning tone can be a form of child abuse.