



## Family Matters

Elizabeth Ahmann, ScD, RN and Deborah Dokken, MPA

# Cline and Greene's Parenting Children With Health Issues: Essential Guidance

Elizabeth Ahmann

**A**mong the many available guides to parenting, Foster Cline and Jim Fay's "Parenting with Love and Logic" materials (see Figure 1) stand out as providing clear, practical strategies – and examples – for raising responsible children. Cline, a child psychiatrist, and Fay, an educational consultant, developed "Love and Logic®" to assist parents in becoming more effective in interactions with their children. As an alternative to the "helicopter" parent or "drill sergeant" approach, Cline and Fay advocate a "consultant" parent role. This approach is built on a base of empathy, love, choices, consequences, and understanding. It fosters a conscious parenting approach designed to raise competent, confident children able to use problem-solving skills successfully as they negotiate life's challenges.

### One Parent's Experience With "Love and Logic"

Lisa C. Greene, the mother of two children with cystic fibrosis (CF), attended one of Cline and Fay's "Love and Logic" workshops. She saw its benefits as a parenting approach and wondered how it might best be applied to caring for her children and others with chronic illness. As she tells it (personal communication, Lisa Greene, June 14, 2012):

*Jacob, my second child, was very strong willed, and when he was 2½ years old, he started the typical toddler "no, no, no" behavior. Although given his CF, taking daily medication was really not negotiable, and I knew how critical his meds were, I was not finding a way to successfully give them to him. I became very stressed about this and questioned my ability to care for him properly. I realized then that I had two kids with CF, each needing a lot of care and requiring tons of meds, and I did not have the skills I needed to parent them properly and assure that I could keep them healthy. Out of my worry, I began to search for advice and support. I asked many people, including my health care team, for advice. I also read many parenting books. Still, I learned little that was applicable to parenting strong-willed kids with chronic illness. Even reassurance that I was a really good parent did not feel adequate for me when parenting my two*

Foster Cline, a child psychiatrist, and Jim Fay, an educational consultant, developed a parenting approach, called "Love and Logic®," to assist parents in becoming more effective in interactions with their children. As an alternative to the "helicopter" parent or "drill sergeant" approach, Cline and Fay advocate a "consultant" parent role. Lisa Greene, a mother of two children with cystic fibrosis, found aspects of the "Love and Logic" approach very applicable to parenting children with medical concerns and has written a book with Dr. Cline titled *Parenting Children with Health Issues*. This book applies the "Love and Logic" approach to specific concerns, including, most notably, developing responsibility and increasing the likelihood of young people's adherence with required medical routines and self-care. Key aspects of this parenting approach include providing a good example of self-care and a positive attitude; giving children many experiences in which they can practice both problem-solving and experience the outcomes of their decisions; offering empathy when things do not go well, even when consequences are necessary; setting expectations of improvement and success with self-management; and offering encouragement as often as possible. Cline and Greene's book provides discussion, examples, strategies, and tips for parents of children with health concerns, and it is an excellent resource for both nurses and parents.

*kids with chronic illness. I felt I needed more, and with my strong-willed toddler, I needed it quickly!*

*One day, I saw an ad on our church bulletin board for a "Love and Logic" parenting class. I decided to take it and am so glad I did. I am not overstating the case when I say that class changed our life: I finally had hope! Using the "Love and Logic" "choices" approach with my son worked like a miracle around taking meds. I could offer him the choice of having his meds before or after an activity, in two minutes or five minutes, and either way, he chose how he was getting his meds. Once Jacob had this measure of control, I finally achieved his cooperation.*

*At the same time, I was frightened as I looked ahead toward the teen years. I knew that rebellion was normal for teens, but I had also heard stories of some teens with CF dying as a result of rebelling against necessary aspects of their care. I recognized that "Love and Logic" offered basic skills for raising children who could make good choices for them-*

Elizabeth Ahmann, ScD, RN, is a Consultant/Writer and Editor, Cheverly, MD, and a member of the Pediatric Nursing Editorial Board.

The **Family Matters** series focuses on issues, information, and strategies relevant to working with families of pediatric patients. To suggest topics, obtain author guidelines, or to submit queries or manuscripts, contact Elizabeth Ahmann, ScD, RN; Series Editor; *Pediatric Nursing*; East Holly Avenue/Box 56; Pitman, NJ 08071-0056; (856) 256-2300 or FAX (856) 589-7463.

**Figure 1.**  
**A Sample of “Love and Logic” Materials**

<b>Books</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parenting with Love and Logic</i></li> <li>• <i>Parenting Teens with Love and Logic</i></li> </ul>
<b>CDs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Four Steps to Responsibility</i></li> <li>• <i>Raising the Odds for Responsible Behavior</i></li> <li>• <i>Avoiding Power Struggles with Kids</i></li> <li>• <i>Love Me Enough to Set Some Limits</i></li> <li>• <i>Helicopters, Drill Sergeants, and Consultants</i></li> </ul>
<b>DVD</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How to Discipline Kids without Losing Their Love and Respect</i></li> </ul>
<b>On-Demand Webinar</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Success with Strong-Willed, Stubborn, or Downright Defiant Kids: Proven Techniques for the Classroom and Home</i></li> </ul>

**Note:** These resources are available from the Love and Logic Web site (<http://www.loveandlogic.com>).

*elves. But since the method depends primarily on natural consequences to teach children lessons of responsibility, I knew it would have limitations as my kids got older. Natural consequences, those outcomes that naturally follow a mistake, are not always safe for kids with chronic illness. So, I still worried about how to safely handle the teen years with my kids.*

*These concerns and my respect for the “Love and Logic” approach led me to contact “Love and Logic” authors Foster Cline and Jim Fay. I raised my questions about children and teens with chronic illness and encouraged Cline and Fay to consider a version of the “Love and Logic” approach “tweaked” for medical issues. When Dr. Cline and I later talked, he understood the need for what I envisioned, and agreed to work on it if I worked with him. We originally thought we’d make a little video and perhaps a booklet. In the end, we developed not only a DVD and a booklet, but also wrote an award-winning book, Parenting Children with Health Issues, and developed a Web site ([www.ParentingChildrenWithHealthIssues.com](http://www.ParentingChildrenWithHealthIssues.com)). Additionally, I began to offer consultation to parents and hospitals, as well as workshops and conference presentations. (A free audio download of an hour-long conference session also is available on the Web site.) These publications and presentations all promote what “Love and Logic” calls a “consultant” parent approach to raising responsible kids with chronic illnesses, kids who are more likely to have, as a result of this approach, reduced problems of medical adherence.*

The book that resulted from this collaboration, *Parenting Children with Health Issues* (Cline & Greene, 2007), is designed to help both parents and children. Cline and Greene offer strategies to help parents increase their effectiveness through setting loving limits; avoiding both power struggles and over-protection; managing a child’s resistance to cooperation with health care routines; easing communication about difficult issues, such as quality and length of life; and navigating both sibling concerns and relationship

**Table 1.**  
**Sample Enforceable Statements**

Ineffective Technique	Effective Technique
Get your inhaler and backpack ready.	I’m happy to go as soon as your inhaler and backpack are ready.
Stop banging your brother with your cast!	I only play chauffer to kids who don’t bang others with their cast.
Quit being mean to your sister. I mean it!	My mouth doesn’t respond when my ears hear snippy comments about your sister’s condition.
I’m sick and tired of your complaining.	I drive when the company I’m driving with doesn’t complain about their check-ups.
No TV until your treatments are done!	I am happy to turn on the TV when your treatments are done.
You need to take your insulin shot before you eat.	I’ll serve dinner when you have finished your shot.
Make sure you bring your enzymes with you.	I am happy to take you places when I don’t have to worry about your stomach cramps.
You can’t go until you finish your IV meds.	You’re welcome to leave as soon as your meds are done.
Watch that attitude with the doctor!	If all goes well with Dr. Anderson, I’ll probably feel so relaxed I’ll want to take us to a movie!

**Source:** Reprinted with permission from Cline and Greene, 2007, p. 59.

challenges. By improving parental effectiveness, the ultimate purpose of these strategies is to benefit their children. For children, this parenting approach promotes the development of traits, such as confidence, resilience, and hope; competence; responsibility; and wise decision-making. As a result, it promotes eventual readiness for capable independent self-management of a chronic condition.

### Basic “Love and Logic” Principles

*Parenting Children with Health Issues* begins with an overview of the basic “Love and Logic” parenting approach. This approach includes several key principles, as well as what the authors term the 5 Es of “Love and Logic.” The 5 Es for parenting children with medical concerns are *example, experience, empathy, expectations, and encouragement*.

To illustrate this parenting approach and how it can be applied to parenting children with health issues, the principles, including the 5 Es, are outlined below. Sample phrases parents can use to implement each approach are offered to bring the principles to life. Additionally, each principle below is contrasted with one or more common, but less effective, parenting approaches (see Table 1).

- 1) Help a child learn to value self-care by providing an *example* of optimistic and responsible behavior.

*Try:*

- Verbalizing one’s own self-care: “I have a cold, so I am going to take care of my body by drinking extra water and juice and going to bed early.”

- Avoid:*
- Being preachy: "You really need to take better care of yourself."
- 2) Build a child's self-concept by having high enough *expectations* and by asking the child's opinion.
- Try:*
- Setting expectations: "I know it is frustrating to miss school again, but if anyone can handle it, you can."
  - Evoking ideas and opinions: "How do you think you might handle your bedtime meds at the sleep-over?"
- Avoid:*
- Placing demands: "You need to take your medicine right now so that we can leave."
  - Babying: "Don't worry, I know it's hard. I'll pack a healthy lunch for you."
- 3) Share control – especially important for children with medical challenges – through offering choices and using "*enforceable*" statements rather than threats.
- Try:*
- Offering choices: "Would you like your treatment before or after you get your pajamas on?"
  - Using enforceable statements: "I will take you to the party *after* you have checked your blood sugar."
  - Note: See Table 1 for additional examples of enforceable statements.
- Avoid:*
- Making threats: "You can't go to the game if you don't take your medicine."
  - Nagging: "I have to tell you every night: wear that retainer!"
- 4) Provide *empathy* before following through with consequences, whether natural or imposed.
- Try:*
- Offering empathy: "I am sorry that didn't work out for you."
  - Giving empathy and consequences: "I know it is disappointing to miss the class trip because your symptoms are flaring up, but it might be better than getting hospitalized away from home where you'd be all alone because we couldn't visit you."
- Avoid:*
- Showing anger: "I can't believe you went out for recess when I said not to!"
  - Laying blame: "I told you you'd be sorry you didn't plan ahead for your meds."
  - Giving unreasonable consequences: "You are grounded for a month for ..."
- 5) Provide *experience* in thinking and problem solving through the use of curiosity, offering guidance, exploring consequences, and allowing the child to make a final decision and then *experience* the consequence of that decision.
- Try:*
- Showing curiosity: "How concerned are you about skipping your nebulizer treatment before soccer practice?"
  - Offering guidance: "One way some kids handle this is ...."
  - Exploring consequences: "I wonder what some options are for helping with the science fair project if you have to miss school today?"
  - Allowing the child to decide: "So how did you decide to handle that?"
- Avoid:*
- Giving endless reminders: "Don't forget your afternoon Adderal!"
  - Fixing the problem: "You need to keep your inhaler in your backpack."
- 6) Promote competence and confidence by offering *encouragement* as often as possible for a job well done.
- Try:*
- Offering encouragement: "You must be proud of yourself for the choice you made. That's what I'd call very responsible behavior."
- Avoid:*
- Doing for an older child: "Here, let me check your blood sugar now."
  - Belittling: "You never write down your peak flows! You know you are supposed to do that every day."
- The following example of a young teen who, despite urging from his mother, was not taking responsibility for his afternoon meds illustrates many of the "Love and Logic" principles in action:
- Jose, a 13-year-old boy with epilepsy, takes medication to control his seizures three times a day. His mom, Gloria, had been making sure he took his meds on schedule since he was diagnosed as a young child. She came to us frustrated at Jose's lack of responsibility in remembering to take his meds. After determining that missing a dose did not have life-threatening implications, we advised her to let Jose know she would be turning over full responsibility to him to manage the afternoon dose of his meds, and that she knew he could handle it just fine. When Jose had a mild seizure at school because he forgot to take his medication and was embarrassed by the attention (the ambulance was called by the concerned school administrator), his mother was empathetic and understanding about the fact that he was upset. Jose had rightly expected particular toys for Christmas. His mom helped him figure out which ones he could do without to help pay for the ambulance. It turned out those expensive few miles provided an excellent learning experience! Jose turned to his mother for ideas on how "he could better remember to take his meds." They had fun brainstorming good ideas and silly ideas alike (pasting a sticky note on his forehead was one discarded option), and their bond was strengthened. His mom said in a note, "Jose may not yet be absolutely perfect about taking his meds right on the dot, but he sure takes it seriously now, and I don't think he has skipped a dose since then. The best part of it is he comes to me now for brainstorming sessions about other issues he has at school and with friends. I think this experience has made us better friends." (Cline & Greene, 2007, p. 74)*
- Cline and Greene (2007) note that allowing natural consequences to occur, especially when medical considerations are the issue, is always a difficult call. The seriousness of allowing consequences has to be weighed against the possibility of more serious complications resulting from ongoing irresponsible behavior. Each situation is unique and calls for a team evaluation in consultation with the parents.

## Topics Addressed in the Book

In addition to reviewing the "Love and Logic" principles, *Parenting Children with Health Issues* addresses a number of important issues faced when parenting children in

this population. Explanation, advice, tips, and practical examples for parents are available in the following chapters:

- Loving Limits: Preparing Kids for the Real World
- No More “No!” Avoiding Power Struggles and Arguments
- From the Inside Out: How Children Really Learn
- Now What? Tips for Parenting from Infancy to Adulthood
- It’s Not Birds and Bees: Talking to Kids about Life and Death
- You’re Not Alone: Psychological Issues Presented by Medical Challenges
- “It’s Not Fair!” Handling Sibling Relationships
- Unique Situations: Developmental Disabilities and Eating Disorders
- Caution: Medical Challenges Affect Marriage and Family Relationships

## How Nurses Can Use the Material

Nurses who understand the challenges faced by parents of children with special health care needs will benefit from learning about parenting approaches that may be most effective for these families. Nurses’ ability to provide parents with both anticipatory guidance and practical strategies to address challenges will strengthen the teaching role. Additionally, providing parents with resources to reinforce, as well as learn more about, effective parenting strategies will increase the likelihood they will implement these approaches – and, as a result, that their children will benefit. In a broader context, providing or hosting educational sessions about the “Love and Logic” approach to parenting children with chronic illness or disability will also make information about these powerful techniques available to an even wider audience.

### Understand the Challenges And Effective Strategies

First, wise nurses realize that parenting a child with special medical needs is an enormous challenge accompanied by grief, fatigue, anxiety, confusion, and hope. Nurses who read *Parenting Children with Health Issues* will find the recommended strategies and their rationale(s) easy to understand. A free study guide for the book provides review questions for each chapter, emphasizing key points, as well as sample scenarios to use in “practicing” the skills. Use of the guide will likely increase the reader’s ability to retain and apply the principles illustrated in each chapter. The guide is available at <http://www.parentingchildrenwithhealthissues.com/catalog/item/7761577/8280224.htm>

Other resources nurses can use to learn more about this approach to parenting are available through the “Professionals” page of the Web site for *Parenting Children with Health Issues* (<http://www.parentingchildrenwithhealthissues.com>). These resources include:

- A link to a CME Video Presentation – “Winning with Special Healthcare Needs: Essential Tools, Tips and Tactics for Motivating Medical Adherence.”
- A free copy of the CD *Top Do’s and Don’ts for Parenting Children with Health Issues and Other Special Needs*.
- A free DVD of *The Five Essential E’s for Raising Responsible Kids*.

Any of these materials can be used by individual nurses or as resources in educational sessions for colleagues or staff. (See “Host Workshops” below for additional resources.)

### Provide Anticipatory Guidance and Education

An important aspect of the nursing role is to provide parents with both anticipatory guidance and effective strategies to handle parenting challenges. The “Love and Logic” parenting approach, generally, and the *Parenting Children with Health Issues* materials, more specifically, offer important skills for parenting children with special health care needs. Nurses who understand this approach can share its basic principles and offer tips and strategies to help parents develop effective approaches that in the words of Cline and Greene (n.d.):

- Are simple and easy to learn.
- Teach responsibility, character, and good coping skills.
- Lower [a parent’s] stress level.
- Have immediate and positive effects.
- Up the odds [a] child’s transition to independence will be fun instead of frantic.

### Share Resources with Parents

Although parents may take in some information and advice in clinic sessions, or during a child’s hospitalization, providing resources – whether print or online – that they can review at home reinforces their learning and increases the likelihood of follow through. The “Love and Logic” Web site offers free general parenting resources for families in both English and Spanish (<http://www.loveandlogic.com/articles.html>), as well as links both to workshop registration and to ordering various resources related to its parenting approach.

The Web site for *Parenting Children with Health Issues* (<http://www.parentingchildrenwithhealthissues.com/resources.html>) offers the following resources for parents:

- Free video and audio resources (same as those available for professionals).
- Print resources in English and Spanish.
- Over 30 articles and blog posts related to topics in the book.
- A Question and Answer section exploring several topics from the book in greater depth.
- Information (under the “Workshops” link) about an annual tele-class on “Love and Logic” for parents of children with cystic fibrosis as well as workshops open to the general public.
- The opportunity to order the book and DVD for *Parenting Children with Health Issues*, shorter booklets in English and Spanish, and/or a CD on “Winning with Diabetes.”

Under the “Professionals” link on the Web site, nurses can also order free informational brochures for families that will direct them to both the book and the Web site. Further, sample articles are available through the “Professionals” page of the Web site that can be reprinted, with permission, in institutional or support group publications.

### Host Workshops

PowerPoint™ slides about the “Love and Logic” approach to parenting children with medical concerns can be obtained by contacting Greene and Cline through links on the Web site. These could easily be used to introduce key concepts in support group meetings or in parent/family education sessions on a unit or in a clinic – as could the free DVD mentioned above. Additionally, a free eight-section DVD for use during patient education or on inpatient education video channels is available through the Web site (<http://www.parentingchildrenwithhealthissues.citymax.com/catalog/item/7761577/9465959.htm>).

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Greene recommends use of the book combined with study guide and the DVD as a format for a more in-depth study in either support groups or nurse-led classes. Greene and Cline are also developing a support group package that will include guidance for leading a group as well as additional video clips to accompany the book chapters.

Greene and Cline also offer workshops for parents and/or professionals addressing the parenting approaches described in *Parenting Children with Health Issues*. These workshops have been successfully conducted at a number of hospitals and non-profit organizations. A workshop offers the opportunity to reach a large number of parents both connected with the hosting institution and throughout the community. Arrangements for an institution or group to host a workshop can be made by contacting Cline and Greene through links on the Web site (<http://www.parentingchildrenwithhealthissues.com/workshop.html>).

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### References

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- Cline, F.W., & Greene, L. (n.d.). *Welcome to 'Winning with CF: Essential Tools, Tips and Tactics for Raising Healthier Kids™'* (handout).