

## **“The Changing of the Guard”** *Tracy Callaway, CPE*



The changing of the guard at Buckingham Place is a spectacular ceremony in which the sacred responsibility of protecting the queen is passed on from one set of professional soldiers to the next slew of guards. Unlike the queen, cozy and smug in her palace, our children can have a very different reaction to our own changing of the guard routine.

Whether it is mom or dad coming home from work, dropping kids off at school, summer camp, or at the babysitter’s house, children can display some pretty unruly or uncharacteristic behavior when responsibility is handed over from one adult to another. Some kids act shy and conservative, others may boil over and act out in any kind of attention grabbing manner and still others seem to transition with ease.

One possible reason for these sometimes awkward or difficult behaviors is that boundaries are being redrawn. Rules, limits, expectations and style of discipline vary, sometimes drastically, from one adult or situation to another. For children the experience is almost like watching all rules disappear during those few moments when responsibility changes hands or a new situation appears. Wow, imagine moments of life without rules, of course chaos would ensue! It’s not only until the limits are reset that children may begin to feel safe from chaos and reevaluate their behavior.

The “changing of the guard” is not the only time when it is important for

children to understand their boundaries. During temper tantrums, annoying arguing or whenever children test our patience the most, it is crucial to remember that deep down children really want to be successful. They want to do what is right and what makes them feel good about themselves. To do so they must first find and know the boundaries.

Kids will act in a monsoon of different ways to learn limits and test the boundaries that are laid out for them, especially if their limits change or are not always clear. This is simply their job. However, when children over three years old consistently test boundaries it is because they have been trained to do so. For example, when children learn that the rule “no cookies before dinner” always means no cookies before dinner, even though they may not like it, they can learn to successfully follow this rule because we have successfully placed it there. However, if we break our own rules because it seems easier to give them the cookie instead of hearing them scream or fight with their brother, we are actually teaching them that the boundary is “when I act out, cookies before dinner is ok.”

We should rejoice in our children’s abilities for successfully learning limits. They are great at it! As royal guards for our children we set them up for success for the game of life and help them avoid obnoxious or unruly behaviors by setting clear limits and most importantly consistently following through.

*Tracy Callaway is a certified parent educator offering workshops and courses that empower parents to assist their children in becoming self-sufficient, responsible and self confident. For more information please call 619-892-9217 or email [tracysd@hotmail.com](mailto:tracysd@hotmail.com) “World Peace Begins in Your Home”*