

## ARE YOU AN ENABLER?

What is “Enabling?”

Enabling is any action taken by a concerned person that softens, minimizes, and/or rationalizes the logical consequences of another person’s **inappropriate** behavior.

### Why do parents (and teachers) enable kids?

- we care about them
- we feel that we’re helping
- we want to protect our children
- we want to protect ourselves from our fear of failure
- if we don’t acknowledge a problem, we don’t have to take action
- we may lack awareness, information, or knowledge to do something else
- kids are good manipulators of our good intentions
- we may have a codependent relationship with them (we want to control the family situation by: not talking about feelings, not rocking the boat, not asserting ourselves, subordinating our needs to theirs)

### Are any of these traits characteristic of you?

- Do you believe you can’t be “conned” by your child?
- Do you have a “savior complex?”
- Do you confuse your child’s success with your personal success?
- Do you confuse love and caring with natural and logical consequences?
- Do you do nothing when confronted with your child’s inappropriate behavior?
- Do you cover up your child’s inappropriate behavior?
- Do you rationalize your child’s inappropriate behavior?
- Do you blame another child or teacher for your child’s inappropriate behavior?
- Do you feel that you can’t allow your child to fail?

If you can answer “yes” to many of these, then you’re probably enabling your child, at least some of the time.

### What are some alternatives to enabling?

- Simply express your feelings of concern about the behavior
- Confront the behaviors
- Point out patterns of changes that concern you; don’t ignore them
- Point out inconsistencies between their verbal and nonverbal behavior
- Enforce clear consequences consistently; let them experience the consequences that school or others systems may impose on them

- Separate your feelings about their behavior from your feelings about them as a child whom you love
- Don't make excuses for them or blame someone else for their behavior
- Let them fail