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**INTERVIEW SERIES**

**Dr. David Swanson Interview**

**Your Quick Reference Guide To  
Stress-Free Parenting**



*Michael Senoff's*

**HardToFind Seminars.com**

**Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit**

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I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

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Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

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## *Dr. David Swanson Interview*

# **Your Quick Reference Guide To Stress-Free Parenting**

Exhausted, overwhelmed, stressed-out. Those words don't need to describe parenting, but often times, they do. Even the best parents give in when their children are whining, begging, throwing tantrums, or just plain making them feel guilty for saying "no." But now you have help for whatever situation comes up.

And in this audio you'll hear all about it from Dr. David Swanson, author of *Help! My Kid Is Driving Me Crazy*. According to him, the trick is in knowing exactly what your buttons are – while having a quick-reference plan for what to do when those buttons get pushed. And you'll hear how to do that in this short audio.

### **You'll Also Hear...**

- How to make sense of your child's behavior – these "natural reactions" don't mean your child is "bad" or headed in the wrong direction
- How to recognize the usual "tactics" children use to get what they want and a few quick tips that will probably stop them in their tracks
- The two different ways we interact with our children – and "real-life" examples of how to make the most of each
- The 3 reasons parents yell at their kids – know your own triggers and you'll be able to devise a better plan
- The single biggest trick divorced parents usually fall prey to and communication strategies that will make sure that doesn't happen to you

The goal of good parenting is to have a healthy, happy family, but that doesn't mean you have to be a pushover in the process. Each situation and child may be different, but with this quick reference guide, you'll be prepared for whatever comes up.

Hi, this is Chris Costello and I've teamed up with Michael Senoff to bring you the world's best health-related interviews. So if you know anyone struggling with their weight, with cancer, diabetes, ADHD, autism, heart disease or other health issues send them over to Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). We're talking with Dr. David Swanson, author of *Help; My Kid is Driving Me Crazy*. Dr. Swanson, thanks so much for joining us today.

Dr. Swanson: Hi Chris, thanks for having me on.

Chris: Can you kind of share with our listeners some of those ways the kids can just manipulate parents and make life difficult?

Dr. Swanson: I will tell you the top reasons they do but I think before I get into that really what we want to talk about is that this is very normal behavior. When I wrote this book, I got two reactions. I got the group of parents that said, "I've got to get that book, that sounds great." And then I got the other group of parents that said, "What do you mean manipulate?" almost as if it meant that kids were lacking in moral character. In no way, does it mean when they manipulate, they lack in moral character.

Kids operate from what I call an "I win" mentality. "I want it now" and they really are lacking in any sort of power in order to get what they want and the only way they can achieve that outside of doing it appropriately would be to push our emotional buttons and that is a very normal, instinctual, intuitive form of behavior. But it does drive us crazy as parents and we need to know how to deal with it.

The most common I think most parents have dealt with is the idea of what I call, "Steamrolling" and this is when your kid incessantly badgers you to get what it is that they want. They'll say things like, "Can I, can I, come on, please, can I have it now, come on, why not, please, let me have it." That kind of thing and it drives us crazy. So this is something though that is very calming and it has to do with the child that's really struggling with the answer "No" and what parents can do with this one is they can sit down when times are calm. You don't want to deal with this one unless you're giving a countermeasure for this, in terms of addressing it with your child until the moment of calm.

So one night, before bed, things are calm, he's not emotionally invested in getting what he wants and you'll sit down with your child and you'll say, "You know, sometimes I give you the answer no, but I know it's really hard for you to accept that answer. And so what I notice you'll do sometimes, you'll keep asking me over and over again after I've told you no. And it's not okay and what I'm going to call this behavior is steamrolling, okay? So for now, whenever I say you're steamrolling me, it has to be with you badgering me for what it is that you want after I've given you the answer."

Once the child understands that, then you're going to explain to the child what it is that you're going to do to intervene. So for example, you're going to say something like, "You know, from now on, when you do that, and by the way you've got to realize I love you and I don't want to fight with you and when you do that it frustrates me and we end up getting in a big argument and it's horrible. So from now on, what I'm going to do is I'm going to say to you, "You know what, you're steamrolling me and I'm going to give it another ten seconds or so but if you continue, I'm going to look at my watch and for every minute that you continue, you'll be going to bed three minutes earlier" or your child has a privilege like being able to you know, watch television or play video games or things like that. "For every minute I look at my watch and you continue, I'm going to take three minutes away of that time **[inaudible 00:03:01]**".

That's the way you can intervene and really become effective in refusing steamrolling. This is very effective and you got to realize that the reason these 17 Manipulation Strategies work is because they crush effectively our emotional buttons as parents and they really do say more about the parents than they do about the child. So for example, the parent who is specifically over-whelmed and exhausted will end up giving in after they've been badgered for a while. This is why those do use steamrolling. Other parents have a very difficult tolerating upset on the part of their child. So in these cases, they essentially use things like emotional blackmail which is "I'll stay **[inaudible 00:03:38]** until you give me what I want. I'll stay anxious until you give me what I want or upset until you do it." Or

they use playing the victim, "I'm the only one who never gets it" because that inspires guilt on the part of the parent for the child's status and that puts pressure on the parent to give in to the child.

So it really does feel a lot more about the parent than it does about the child in terms of what manipulation strategies are used.

Chris: So it sounds like the kids are pretty sophisticated in knowing what's going to work.

Dr. Swanson: You know I think as people, all of us, we're just very good about intuitively knowing during a conversation or an interaction about how others are feeling and how to act in such a way to get what it is that you want and this is what kids are doing. It's very normal behavior but again, it leaves parents just wanting to pull their hair out.

Chris: And so the way to stop it is to really look at it, start talking about it and using these techniques that you describe in *Help; My Kid is Driving Me Crazy*.

Dr. Swanson: Exactly.

Chris: What are some of the other things that kids do?

Dr. Swanson: Well, another thing that a lot of parents will get is this idea of divide and conquer. This is, you know, "I know mom's going to say no, but I know dad will probably say yes. But I'm going to go to dad and I'm going to ask him because he's probably going to give me the answer that I wanted. If dad says yes and mom says no, then I'll go to mom and I'll say something like 'but Dad said I could'" and that really has to do with getting in between mom and dad and going to the one who gives me the answer that I want. This creates a lot of stuff in the marriage and I should say this: parents who fall particularly for this one are parents who are divorced and that has to do a lot with the fact that they just don't communicate as much as parents who are married.

Chris: Is it better to just side with the other parent?



Dr. Swanson: It really has to do with this idea of communication. It's both parents are basically off on their own, parents think freely making decisions without the other, they're going to fall hard when it comes to divide and conquer. Most parents I think do find that they share for the most part take parenting philosophies to be the only missing component here is talking about it. You know, talking about what things we can get **[inaudible 00:05:29]** independently without getting the other's approval and what things we probably should tell each other. You know, I need to talk to your mom or I need to talk to your dad about it and come together and have a communication about that. So if you can work that out, divide and conquer becomes ineffective.

Definitely, if one doesn't work, they'll go to another one. If it crosses the line, you know, for example, in my home my wife and I, we both talk about some of the challenges that our kids will present to us, whether it's going out and playing before homework and my kids are fairly young, so how far down the street can they go by themselves. Things like that are things that we talk about and so we know ahead of time when we're asked certain questions. Sometimes, we're asked questions that we've never talked about, you know, "Can I do this" and quite frankly we've never talked about it so what I'll say is, "You know, I don't know, I have to talk to your mom about that" and she'll do the same.

We don't get a lot of divide and conquer in our house because the kids know that we communicate pretty readily and we do sit down and make these decisions together.

*I'm Chris Costello reporting from Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).*

Chris: So, Doctor Swanson, one of the other things you talk about is that parents have three major misconceptions. What are those misconceptions?

Dr. Swanson: [Laughter] The things that we wish would be true but they don't always turn out to be true. One of the big ones is that kids would have empathy when they're emotionally invested in getting what it is that they want. And there really are two times that you'll deal with your child. One is when he or she is emotionally invested in getting what they want and the other one is when they don't have an emotional investment



in getting what they want. If you're trying to talk reasons with your child when they're emotionally invested in getting what they want, you're going to be frustrated. At that moment, kids operate from what I call an "I win" mentality. "I want it now" and most of that communication will be geared in such a way that you know, the whole purpose is to convince you to give me what I want, that kind of a thing. So it's very important that parents realize that because waiting for a time when a child is available to talk will get them much farther and they'll feel much better about the conversation than if they try to intervene in the moment where there's conflict or the child really wants something, it's just not going to be effective.

Another misconception is this idea that others meant and reward always work. It doesn't. The fact of the matter is it doesn't. There's a third variable going on here. The third variable is our emotional platen as parents. Think about this, if I'm a child who doesn't get what I want, I'm probably going to be upset about that. This is your point example by the way but I'm probably upset about that. Let's say if I want a cookie before dinner and you say no. Well, I'm going to keep asking for that cookie. At some point after you say no a couple of times, I'm going to realize, I'm not going to get it.

But now I'm angry that I didn't get my cookie, I feel cheated and I'm going to keep asking for it just to even the score. I like to see you get upset too because if I have to be upset, you can be upset too. So the idea that reward and punishment works, it doesn't. I mean the fact of the matter is if we are emotionally responsive to our kids, that adds a third variable and it's a very powerful for our kids to be able to push our buttons and get a reaction.

Chris: What do you do with that kid that wants a cookie?

Dr. Swanson: [Laughter] you know, you have to decide for yourself whether or not it's okay. You know, if it's not, you set the limit and then you deal with it and depending on what your child would do as a response whether it's punishment which is **[inaudible 00:08:34]** cheating them or steamrolling which is to continue to ask you for the cookie or playing the victim, you know, "I feel so horrible. I never get a cookie before dinner", that kind of a thing. In the book, depending on you

know, what strategy it is, I really designed this book to be a quick reference guide that you can turn to the page up front, find out what strategy they're using and turn right to that chapter to figure out how to respond in the moment to this particular manipulation strategy. I found in my practice that parents yell at their kids for three reasons. One is because we feel exhausted; we just can't take any more. We're overwhelmed today and so any more can set us off and we start to yell.

The second one is this idea that our feelings are hurt. So the kid will... my kids know I like to cuddle with them and so what I might get from them if they want to punish me or they're upset at me for something that's not what they wanted. You know, my oldest might say something like, "Okay, Daddy but I'm not going to cuddle with you." [Laughter] It does hurt my feelings a little bit but you know the fact of the matter is I got the feel for what it is. He's punishing me because he didn't get what he wanted. If I let it hurt my feelings, then I'm mostly going to yell in response.

And the last reason is that parents feel ineffective and that was the whole mission in this lesson. I wanted parents to feel effective in terms of dealing with these behaviors on the part of the children because if they were, they would **[inaudible 00:09:43]** and they would feel much happier in the family, they would feel a lot more close to the family. So this book does answer, really help parents become more effective with their children.

The beginning part of this book, I mean it's very helpful in the moment in terms of being able to pick it up, you know, get the answers you need in less than three minutes. I mean you really can do that with this book. But you're responding to your child, there are countermeasures that I'm giving you and so in the back of the book what I've done is I've designed a new model that based on the top two reasons your child manipulates and I'll give you all give of them, this model will help you to determine what your child's temperament is and then as a result of that, you can now tailor make and the book will help you to do this, tailor make an environment at home that will be most conducive to your child's success. It will really help reduce the manipulation in the future. And this is very helpful because this is much

more pro-active and as time goes on, you'll start to feel the house is much more calm over all.

As parents we do have three innate desires. One is to keep our kids safe, the second is to look out for their better interest in the future and lastly, we'd like to see them happy and I don't think there's going to be very many parents who ever encounter a problem with their child that doesn't involve the child's happiness being placed in a conflict of whether it's safety or better interest. And it's very difficult for us. Who hasn't gone to bed at night feeling bad about something that transpired with your child during the day? So what I keep trying to do is to prioritize.

Responsible parents, one who walk away feeling fulfilled, they in their role as a parent feel really good about what they've done, always place safety first, better interest second and unfortunately, the child's happiness last. Kids won't feel very happy; they'll seek that out on their own. You don't need to worry about that. But always put safety first, better interest second and unfortunately the child's happiness last and you'll be great as a parent.

Chris: What do you think is the most important thing that parents can do to raise kids well?

Dr. Swanson: I think in knowing ourselves does a world of good in terms of reducing the tension with our kids. I mean, all of us **[inaudible 00:11:30]** over all want to feel close to our kids. We want to have this happy relationship. Every bit of research out there that says, "How do you move close to your kids? How do you have that happy relationship?" start at the point of discipline. The reason we're not consistent, the reason we're ineffective with our kids is because emotionally, our buttons get pushed and we react to that. You need to know yourself. You need to know where your vulnerabilities are and you need to deal with them. The more we know ourselves and the more we do to really kind of put our self in a good place, the more we do to raise happy, healthy children.

Chris: If you want to find out more about what Dr. Swanson is doing, you can go to [DrDavidSwanson.com](http://DrDavidSwanson.com) or

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[thehealthychild.info](http://thehealthychild.info) and Dr. Swanson, we thank you so much for spending time with us.

Dr. Swanson: Thanks, Chris, thanks for having me on.

Chris: All right, thank you so much.

*That's the end of our interview and I hope you enjoyed it. For more great health-related interviews, go to Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).*