

of age, getting the relationship back on track will require work. "By the time a parent feels they have lost control, the behaviour has been going on for a while and seems unstoppable," says Mpumi. "But, depending on the age of the child and the desire of the parent to gain control, the situation can be fixed."

Psychological research shows that manipulation is a learnt behaviour. "Most children will try different tactics to see how much power they can wield and how much they can get things to go their way. A big part of parenting, especially when children are still young is correcting this behaviour; because if not stopped, your child will grow up to be a manipulative adult," warns Mpumi. A common manipulation among younger children is tears and tantrums. Older children will often manipulate their parents with lack of affection and the silent treatment.

## WHO IS THE BOSS?

Mpumi says that many parents don't want to take responsibility for their children's manipulative ways and when the kids get older (and more manipulative), they feel like victims. "This does not mean that it is your fault that your child is manipulative, but you're responsible if you don't actively correct that behaviour early. It will be hard and you will be met with resistance, but it's your job to make sure the manipulation doesn't work. If you give in every time your child tries to get their way, why would they stop? When you give in, you reward the manipulative behaviour, which means it will continue and get worse."

It's important for parents to remember that they are supposed to be in control. Allowing your kids to lead your relationship means you've been overthrown from your position, and that is your fault. "People blame the constitution for giving children too many rights but that's not true," says Mpumi. "Many parents don't take care of their kids and let them do what they want. When the

end result is unruly, manipulative children with major entitlement issues, the parents act surprised."

## TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

Kids will use different caregivers to manipulate situations for their own benefit. For example, if gogo allows children to eat sweets at night and mommy doesn't, the child will ask gogo behind mommy's back. "When it comes to parenting, all caregivers involved need to be on the same page. Everyone must understand the rules and there should be no room for the child to lie to anyone in order to win," advises Mpumi.

Another part of teamwork that ensures structures to curb manipulation is not allowing children to be involved in grown-up conversations. "If your children hear you speaking about how useless your husband is, they might use that information because they already know you aren't a solid team. Your child will play you against each other, and it will initially be for small things like sleeping late and sweets; but as they get older, it will be for bigger things that have an impact on your family."

Mpumi advises that every time your child tries to manipulate you, there should be some kind of consequence. "It doesn't have to be a beating, but don't give in to the manipulation. It's also important that you tell your child that you see their manipulation and will not tolerate it."

Uncurbed, your child will use this learnt behaviour in other areas of their lives too. "You don't want to leave this behaviour unchecked; the consequences may not seem serious now, but it will grow," concludes Mpumi. **B**

If your child is extremely manipulative and all your efforts to curb it go unnoticed, it helps to get counselling. Visit [www.famsa.org.za/](http://www.famsa.org.za/) for various counselling options.

FIRST  
1000 days

Right Start Bright Future

*The first 1 000 days of a baby's life shapes their future.*

### What is the First 1 000 Days?

This is the period from conception until a child's 2nd birthday, which offers a unique window of opportunity to shape healthier and more prosperous futures.

### What are the important aspects?

The correct diet (and nurturing environment for both mother and baby), building a bond with the parent or caregiver in a safe and loving environment as well as regular, stimulating play are crucial aspects of healthy child development.

### Why is this time period so important?

Research shows that children who benefit from essential First 1 000 Day outcomes, can earn up to 20% more as adults versus their counterparts; and are more likely to have healthy families themselves.

### Does this mean I should be thinking about my life choices and health before I become pregnant?

Yes, absolutely. The right decisions about nutrition, the environment, safety and support for the pregnant mother play a key role in determining baby's future happiness and success.

### Who can help?

It makes a big difference when babies have one consistent caregiver taking care of them. Dads can also play a crucial part.

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