

## ***SIMON SAYS...***

Little Simon is a precocious 5 year old who has lots on his mind and uses every opportunity to let others know what he thinks. Everyone loves Simon; he is cute, cheerful and loveable. Yet, some feel sorry for Simon's mother, as she is often put in an uncomfortable position due to Simon's innocent and unintentional indiscretions. Thus, we have what I like to call, 'Simon Says...'. Of course, we have all been victims of our child's indiscretions and it comes with the territory, but how we choose to deal with the situation will make all the difference. Think of this article as a guide to gracefully handling those red-in-the-face situations where your child asks or says something completely and utterly inappropriate.

### ***Simon says...Why are you so fat?***

If the person is 7 months pregnant, this situation is easy to handle. If not, you have to do some quick-thinking damage control. Saying too much will just make you and the other person more uncomfortable. Simply tell your child that everyone has different bodies and that it is not nice to say such things to others. Immediately apologize for his indiscretion and change the subject to something more upbeat. Once you are alone with your child, explain how a question like that may hurt a person's feelings. Ask your child how he would feel if someone said something about him that he was self-conscious about.

### ***Simon says...Look!...and then proceeds to point and stare at someone with a physical disability?***

I once heard a wonderful story that we can all benefit from. A mother of four from New York City was walking down the street when her kids spotted someone coming toward them in a wheelchair. They were young and had never seen someone in a wheelchair and proceeded to stare. Immediately, the mother told them it was not polite to stare at others and said that they were only aloud to look if they smiled and waved or said. Of course, we wouldn't shield our child's eyes so they don't appear to be staring, as this is nonsense and plain ignorant. By teaching this valuable lesson, her children realized that they could look by smiling and saying hello and the mother avoided her kids staring, mouths agape out of curiosity. More importantly, the individual who was in the wheelchair had a lovely day because four polite and darling children smiled and said hello.

### ***Simon says...My mommy told my daddy that you are boring!***

This is one of those cases where your gut instinct says, deny, deny, deny! Yes, you may have said something to this affect, but there is no reason to put a rift in the friendship by admitting that you told your husband that she was a complete bore, never had anything intelligent to say and spending time with her put you to sleep. Don't lie, but use every bit of natural ability you have to disarm the situation. Smile, laugh gracefully and explain that your child must have misunderstood a conversation you were having with your husband and laugh it off with, "Wow, kids say the silliest things!" Remember, the less you make eye contact, the more this other person will see right through you. Of course, I am not saying that lying is the way to go...but you get the drift! The most valuable

lesson you should learn from this is to make sure little children are not in earshot of your conversations...they are like parrots and have no conception of what discretion truly means. If you haven't done so already, this may be a good time to start teaching what discretion means.

***Simon says...I saw mommy crying the other night.***

If you really wanted to share your sorrow with another, you would have told them. I am sure the other adult is quite aware of this. They probably feel more uncomfortable than you that you were put in this awkward situation. There is no need to explain why you were crying if you would rather not share with that person. If they ask if everything is okay, you can cheerfully state that you are fine and were just having one of those days. Remember that when you are upset, your child is naturally going to be concerned about you. They may tell others because they feel sad that you were upset. We cannot always control our emotions, but we shouldn't put a young child in the position of having to worry about our well-being.

***Simon says...We belong to two country clubs, how many do you belong to?***

You may ask, "Who would say such a thing?" This question was not pulled out of thin air; it was the topic of conversation amongst a group of four year old girls. Any child can feel empowered by material possessions and comparing is only natural for young children. You absolutely want to put a stop to it immediately because too much emphasis on who has the nicest house, the best car, and the most memberships will eventually make your young child into a spoiled teen and pretentious adult. There are so many other more worthy topics for children to discuss. A parent must ask themselves, "Where did these children learn to talk like this?" It often starts in the home. If a child hears you comparing wealth, putting others down, they naturally think that those are the things that are truly important in life. These are not the kind of lessons we want to be teaching children.

There is a bit of Simon in all of our children (and even in us!), but with a little know-how and practice, we are guaranteed to handle the awkward or embarrassing situation with confidence and style.