



# Pain & Disappointment

*What's Necessary...& What's NOT*

by Cheri Gregory

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You know the “mama bear” instinct that kicks in when you feel like someone is messing with your baby? I know that protect-or-die feeling all too well! And when our children are in real danger, this God-given response is a blessing.

But for too many years, my “mama bear” instinct was stuck in over-drive. In my zeal to protect my children from the inappropriate pain & disappointment of my childhood, I unwittingly tried to shield them from *all* pain & disappointment.

Learning to discern between “Not/NEVER Okay” and “Necessary” pain & disappointment is a vital proactive parenting skill. When faced with a crying child, it’s easy to slip into “mama bear” mode...unless we’re prepared to recognize—and respond to—“maturity moments” when they occur!

*You may find yourself reacting strongly to some items on this list. If you experienced any of these as a child, as did I, you may try to “re-parent” yourself through your children. We can not change our own past by giving our children the “perfect” present or future. I’d gently urge you to prayerfully consider Christian counseling so that you will “raise up [your] child in the way [s]he should go”...rather than the way you **wish** you had been raised.*

## Not Okay / NEVER Okay Pain & Disappointment

1. **Physical & Sexual abuse:** a child should never be the victim of those with power and domination issues; they must be protected from predators.
2. **Verbal & Emotional abuse:** while the bruising and scarring is invisible, a child can be battered by words, tone of voice, and emotional manipulation.
3. **Relational abuse:** a child should never be the pawn who gets sacrificed in the games played by adults; this often happens with divorce and between parent & grandparent.
4. **Spiritual abuse:** God’s love/salvation must never be used as shortcuts to elicit desired behaviors from children; “God won’t love you if you...” is a terrible phrase.
5. **Neglect:** children crave structure, so when loving limits are not set and maintained—i.e. for healthy eating, sleeping, and media habits—they suffer.
6. **Favoritism:** a child should not be consistently put on a pedestal, nor should a child be regularly ignored while another is given “hero” status.

**”When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” I Corinthians 13:11**

*Pain does not necessarily indicate injury; a “mama bear” response is not always appropriate, no matter how much a child is crying or how miserable (s)he seems. Some vital life lessons can only be learned through necessary pain and disappointment. Such circumstances can be “maturity moments”—times when a child practices thinking and behaving Godly growing up, despite his or her feelings of the moment.*

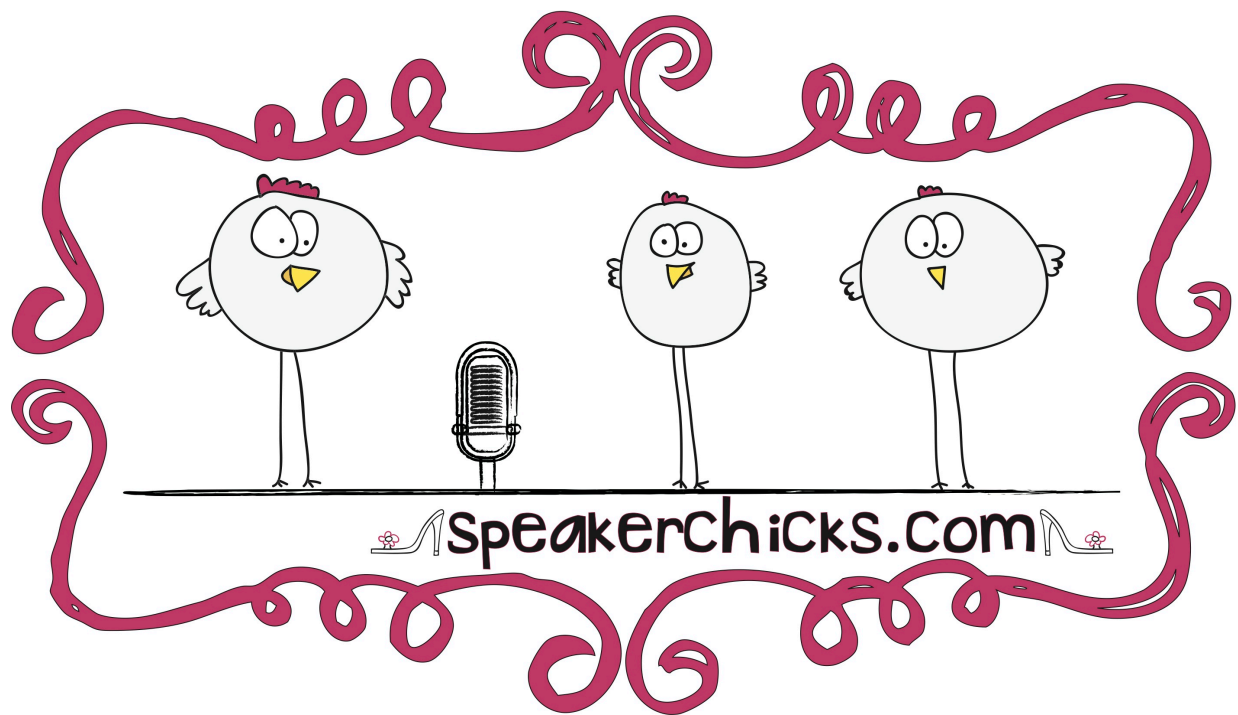
## **Necessary Pain & Disappointment (“maturity moments”)**

1. **No (get):** Children badgering parents into buying them something at the store can be relentless! When parents finally cave in, they commit a dangerous reinforcement error, teaching the child “just keep whining and eventually I’ll get you what you want.” Children need to learn delayed gratification and appropriate self-denial.
2. **No (do):** Children often expect/demand to do whatever an older sibling, or even their parents, are doing. If others in the house are staying up ‘til midnight to watch a movie, the 5-year-old expects to do the same thing. Children need to learn that there are graduated levels of privileges in life; early on, their parents will decide what they will do and when.
3. **Change of plans:** Many parents are far too accommodating, adjusting their own schedules, denying their own needs, doing whatever it takes to make sure the child’s plans / schedule come first. Children need to practice flexing and adapting with grace and dignity to the many “curve balls” life will throw them.
4. **Sharing the spotlight:** Yes, it’s hard to watch your brother or sister take center stage on their birthday. No, you don’t need to be showered with gifts and special attention to “make up for it.” Stepping back while someone else takes the spotlight is a life skill children need to learn; they shouldn’t expect special rewards or “atta-boys” for doing so.
5. **Struggle:** Many children believe that geniuses are born with extraordinary abilities. Thus, if they aren’t naturally good at something, they see no use even trying; their struggles are embarrassing “proof” that they are not gifted. Children need to learn that we **all** learn by struggling (most so-called “geniuses” have struggled through 10,000 hours to become “gifted.”)
6. **Failure:** Many normally sane parents “lose it” when their child fails. They go into spin control mode and start rounding up the usual suspects so they have someone—anyone!—to blame so that their child’s failure doesn’t reflect on their parenting. If it’s an F at school, they attack the teacher. If a friendship goes sour, they demonize the other child. They unwittingly send the message that failure is unacceptable and must be denied. But failure is vital part of life! Children must learn to fail gracefully, to learn from their failures, and to move beyond them.

**Engaging, entertaining, and enthusiastic,** Cheri Gregory connects women to the transforming power of God’s love. A story-teller extraordinaire, Cheri draws from Scripture and personal experiences that resonate with women’s frustrations, fears and failures, bringing hope that they are *not* alone and inspiring courage that they *can* grow beyond their circumstances.

Cheri, herself, was raised in what *appeared* to be the “perfect Christian home.” As a child, compensating for underlying family issues, she strove to be the perfect “good little girl.” As a teenager, reacting to her older brother’s drug addiction, she nearly lost her life to eating disorders. Cheri identifies with those who are burdened and offers hope for the transformation possible through the renewing power of God’s rescuing love.

Married since 1988 to her opposite Personality, Daniel, a pastor, teacher, and musician, Cheri is an English teacher and the mother of two college-age kids (who are also opposite Personalities): Annemarie and Jonathon.



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