



Discipline: your gift to your child

One of the greatest challenges you face in raising your child is guiding her toward positive behavior. It is also one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. Discipline is the system that you can put in place to teach and guide your child.

Parents often see discipline as the same as punishment, but effective discipline is very different.

DISCIPLINE BEGINS WITH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP

In order for discipline to work, you and your child need to have a positive, loving relationship. Discipline really begins with building that relationship through meeting the needs of your child, and enjoying each other's company. Get to know and accept your child. You will certainly not approve of everything she does, but the foundation for discipline is appreciating and enjoying your child for the person she is.

LIMITS PROVIDE SECURITY AND STABILITY

Children need limits on what they can do to feel safe and to teach them how to behave in different situations. Of course, limits need to be appropriate for your child's age and experience. All parents need support to think about the things they want to teach their child and the limits they will set to do that. Talk to your Parents as Teachers parent educator if you want to discuss setting limits for your child.

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY

When limits are not consistently enforced, your child can become confused and fail to figure out just what is expected of her. Having the same limits and enforcing them consistently makes it easier on your child, *and* easier on you.

PARENTS CAN BE FIRM AND FAIR

Children can really push your buttons! One of the most effective things you can do to enforce limits is to control your anger. When your child sees you out of control she can feel insecure. She also receives a negative model for her own behavior. Deal with disobedience in a calm but firm manner. Let the consequence, not your emotions, be the deterrent for your child's misbehavior in the future. The long term goal of

discipline is to help your child develop self-control and responsibility for her own behavior, not just the ability to respond to anger, punishment, or someone else's emotion.

KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE

If punishment is necessary, don't do it when you are angry. Put the child in a safe place and calm down. Yelling and physical punishment are destructive to your child. Don't let anyone near your child who is violent or out of control. After punishment or a disagreement, reconnect with your child. Help her realize it was her behavior you disapproved of, not her. Tell her you love her and hug her if she feels like it. ❖

HELPFUL TIPS FOR TEACHING DISCIPLINE

THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE is helping children develop their own sense of morality and personal responsibility. Here are some tips as you go about this important job:

- ♦ **Concentrate on the positive.** State what you want your child to do, not what she should not do.
- ♦ **Catch your child being good.** Notice good behavior more than you do misbehavior.
- ♦ **Decide on limits and family rules.**
- ♦ **Explain limits and rules in advance.** Give the reason for the rule.
- ♦ **Repeat, repeat, repeat!** Reinforce limits verbally for your child.
- ♦ **Teach by example.** Your controlled, considerate behavior will teach more than your words.
- ♦ **Acknowledge your child's feelings.** She might not like a limit and can say so, but she still must follow it.
- ♦ **Expect your child to do well, not to misbehave.**

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