

Building Strong Families

How to Discipline



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What is Discipline?

Let's think about discipline. Remember that young children are **not** small adults. You always need to think of your children's needs.

What do you think the purpose of discipline is? (Write your answer below.)

Children can keep many things in mind when they decide what is best to do. Teachers think that discipline helps children learn from experience. Then they can make better decisions.

Discipline is a way to correct and teach a child. Discipline deals with a child's actions. It should not make a child feel like a bad or worthless person. Discipline tells a child:

- **what you do not want the child to do**
- **why you do not want him to do it**
- **what you do want him to do**

Discipline tells a child how you feel about what she has done. If you are angry, you can tell your child, "*I feel angry about _____.*"

But your child should know that you love her even when she does things that make you angry. Always tell your child, "*I love you--just the way you are.*"

What is the Difference Between Discipline and Punishment?

Discipline teaches a child how to act. Discipline should make sense to a child. It should relate to how the child misbehaves. And discipline should help a child feel good about himself.

Punishment only tells a child that she is bad. It does not tell a child what she should do instead. Punishment often has nothing to do with what the child did wrong. So, punishment may not make sense to the child.

Example 1:

A three-year-old throws his crayons on the floor.

Punishment

Yell "No!" and tell him he is a bad boy.

Discipline

Tell him not to throw crayons. Explain that they could get broken or mark up the floor. Tell him to pick up the crayons. Then put them out of his reach until the next day.

Example 2:

A ten-year-old spends all her time after school watching TV and forgets to do homework.

Punishment

Yell, scream, and take away her allowance.

Discipline

Explain that the rule is only one TV show after school. Tell her that she must do her homework. Then take away her TV watching for a few days or a week.

Notice that the punishments did not relate to what the children did wrong, and they did not teach them what to do. They may have made the children feel that they were bad.

Parenting Methods – Worksheet

Parents often discipline their children the way they were disciplined as children. If parents are unhappy about their own childhood, they may be easier or harder on their children.

1. Who disciplined you as a child, and how did they usually do it?

2. As a child, how did you feel about the way you were disciplined?

3. Think about the way you discipline your children. Is it the same or different from the way you were disciplined?

The statements on the next pages help you think about the way you parent your children. You can find out about your discipline style and learn how this style affects your children.

Identifying Your Parenting Style

Look over this list. Put a check mark (✓) in front of each statement that you agree with.

- ___1. It is better to have no rules than to worry about breaking them.
- ___2. Children should decide for themselves what they will do.
- ___3. My work and/or home jobs are so stressful that I can't worry about what my children are doing.
- ___4. The children won't listen to me, so I have quit trying.
- ___5. I want my children to think of me mainly as their friend.
- ___6. I do not expect my children to fail or make mistakes.
- ___7. Children should do as I say until they are old enough to decide for themselves.
- ___8. I was spanked when I was a child, and I turned out okay.
- ___9. When my children don't behave, I yell at them and threaten them with many different punishments.
- ___10. I expect my children to do what I tell them without talking about it first.
- ___11. Children should have choices about what they can do.
- ___12. Sometimes children have a point. I try to listen to them.
- ___13. Although it is hard work, parents and children should talk about family rules. Then each person can share his or her feelings.
- ___14. Each child should be able to feel like an individual.
- ___15. I do not criticize my children or call them names, even when I cannot understand why they act the way they do.

Now you can see how you score on the three parenting styles. Count the check marks for the question groups below and write the numbers in the blanks. Then you will see which parenting style is closest to yours.

Questions 1-5 _____ Parenting Style # 1 (Permissive)

Questions 6-10 _____ Parenting Style # 2 (Authoritarian)

Questions 11-15 _____ Parenting Style # 3 (Democratic/Authoritative)

Which style did most of your check marks fall under?

Parents are usually some of each type. But this survey helps you find out what type you “mostly” are.

Description of Three Parenting Styles

PARENTING STYLE #1—Permissive

Permissive parents do not usually make demands, set up rules, or punish. They try not to be in control. Some parents do not get involved, spending little time and effort with their children; they often say that stress and work keep them from doing so. Other parents may try to do so much for their children that they neglect themselves. Some permissive parents hated the strict discipline they got, so they try to be easier on their children.

CHILDREN FROM STYLE # 1

The children of these permissive parents may lack self-control and be immature. They may be mean at home. These children often have low self-esteem and get upset easily. They may try to get attention by skipping school or using drugs.

PARENTING STYLE #2—Authoritarian

Authoritarian parents are strict and demanding. They may use lots of physical punishment, yelling, and threats. They value obedience and order, and they don't like the children to question their demands. Parents do not let their children make choices. They try to keep them from becoming independent.

CHILDREN FROM STYLE # 2

The children of these authoritarian parents are often not very curious or creative. They are not very independent, and they may find it hard to make decisions. Often they will follow the rules only when adults are around. They may have low self-esteem and be mean.

PARENTING STYLE #3—Authoritative

Authoritative parents may not be perfect, but they are more balanced in setting limits and giving children independence. They set high goals, expect good behavior, enforce rules, and urge their children to become independent. They respect their children's rights and let them make choices. They communicate well with their children, listening to them and allowing more give-and-take.

CHILDREN FROM STYLE #3

The children of these authoritative parents often make good decisions. They are more independent and confident, and they have higher self-esteem. They can control themselves better so that they are not too aggressive.

Activity—Looking at My Parenting

A good parent does these things:

“Good” things I do as a parent are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Punishments, threats, lectures, bribes and rewards might give quick results, but something is lost in the quick fix.

What could I do differently as a parent? How can I improve?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Discipline That Is Right for the Age of Your Child

Methods	Age			
	1 - 2 ½ Yrs.	2 - 5 Yrs.	5 - 12 Yrs.	12 – 18 Yrs.
Change the child's focus				
Remove tempting things and change situations				
Remove child from the activity				
Encourage the child				
Give the child a "time out"				
Use natural and logical consequences				
A.C.T.				
Allow some give and take				
Agree and shake hands on it!				

Look at the chart. Notice that there are different ways to discipline children in different age groups.

How to Carry Out the Discipline Methods

CHANGE THE CHILD’S FOCUS. Help children go to another activity or toy. This lets children get away from what they should not be playing with and still gives them something to do.

REMOVE TEMPTING THINGS AND CHANGE SITUATIONS.

Move some things in your home so your child cannot reach them. This helps to keep your child safe and prevents breaking things. Also, watch for situations that might cause your child to misbehave. Try to change things or step in before that happens.

REMOVE THE CHILD FROM THE ACTIVITY. When a child cannot follow rules, fights, or is mean to others, it is best to take the child away from the activity.

ENCOURAGE THE CHILD. Encouragement is helpful for children of all ages! Encouragement works better than praise. Praise judges the person, while encouragement talks about the actions.

Note the difference between praise and encouragement	
PRAISE	ENCOURAGEMENT
I'm so proud of you.	I bet you feel good about finishing your work!
	You must be proud of yourself.
Good work!	It looks like you were working hard.
	You must have enjoyed doing that.

GIVE THE CHILD A “TIME OUT.” Use a “time out” when a child has lost self-control. Have the child spend time alone in a place that has no rewards. Then the child can think about the misbehavior. A “time out” can last about one minute of time for each year of the child’s age. “Time outs” can be very helpful if you don’t use them too often. But if children think of “time outs” as punishment, they may become angry and try to misbehave during the “time out.”

USE NATURAL OR LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES. When a child misbehaves, you let him or her experience the consequences of the misbehavior. Sometimes these are the consequences that would happen naturally because of the misbehavior (natural consequences). When you can’t let natural consequences happen, you set up other consequences that fit the misbehavior (logical consequences).

Natural and logical consequences make sense to the child. He or she is likely to see them as the result of misbehavior and understand why the behavior was wrong. The child is not likely to view them as a punishment.

Natural consequences – Children learn many good lessons from natural consequences. For example, a child who refuses to eat supper during mealtime will end up waiting until breakfast to eat again.

Logical consequences – If you are not able to set up natural consequences or if it is too dangerous to do so, use logical consequences. Make sure to choose consequences that the child can logically relate to the misbehavior. Children can sometimes help in planning these consequences (and they may be more strict on themselves than a parent would be!)

For example, if your child rides a bike into the street, you wouldn’t want to let the natural consequence happen of him being hit by a car. So, you use logical consequences and take away his bike for a few days or a week. Or if the child won’t put her toys away, you may put them out of her reach for the day.

A.C.T.

Acknowledge feelings. Let the child talk about his/her feelings. Tell the child that you understand how he/she feels. “I can see that you are angry about that.”

Communicate limits. State the rule that the child must follow. “The rule is that we do not hurt animals or people.”

Target two choices. Tell the child two things that he or she can do, and let the child choose. If you do this, both choices must be okay. For example, if your child kicks the puppy, you can offer her two choices: “It hurts the puppy when you kick him. Would you like to kick a ball or play with the puppy?”

ALLOW SOME GIVE-AND-TAKE. Parents and children need to really listen to each other. When you listen to your children, it helps them listen to you even when they don’t want to. Listening helps both of you understand each other. Then one or both of you might be willing to give in a little. You will be more likely to agree on rules and consequences.

AGREE AND SHAKE HANDS ON IT!

When you talk and listen to each other, you and your child can find things to agree on. Then you can make a contract. Write down what you can agree on. Then both of you can sign it. Finally, you can shake hands on it! For example:

Problem: Jimmy’s room is dirty.

Agreement: Jimmy will clean his room on Saturday.

Rewards/consequences: If Jimmy cleans the room, he can go to the movies on Saturday. If he doesn’t clean the room, he can’t go to the movies.

(Jimmy and Mom sign the sheet and shake hands on it.)

Activity—Discipline Methods for My Child

Think about the discipline methods you've learned about. Then think about one of your children. Write down your child's name and age:

My child's name: _____ Age: _____

On the left side, write down the main ways that your child misbehaves. On the right side, list some discipline methods you can use for this misbehavior.

My child's misbehavior:

Discipline methods I can use:

1. _____

A. _____
B. _____

2. _____

A. _____
B. _____

3. _____

A. _____
B. _____

4. _____

A. _____
B. _____

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