

## **Where do I begin?**

- Discipline comes from the word "disciple," which means to teach. You need to teach your child the proper way of behaving.
- Help your child practice good behavior. Show him what to do and how to act. Be an example.
- Certain behaviors are never okay for a child of any age. Your child does not have a choice when his health, safety, or future could be hurt. For example:

### **Health**

- A child who is sick must take his medicine.

### **Safety**

- A child cannot play in the street. A teen cannot ride in the car with people who have been drinking.

### **Future**

- A child needs to go to school. School prepares him to work and earn a living.

Other issues are negotiable (you and your child can decide what is okay and not okay) such as dyeing his hair purple or not making the bed.

## **What should I expect?**

- Adolescence is a special time. Adolescents should be treated differently than young children.
- Children behave differently depending on their age and personality. Be fair about what you expect of them.
- Tell your children what you expect. Make instructions clear and firm. Show them how to do what you ask.
- Do not ask your child to do something unless he is allowed to say no. Instead of asking, "Are you ready for bed?" say, "It's time to get ready for bed."
- Give your child warnings about what should happen next. "In 5 minutes, it's time to pick up the toys." "In 10 minutes, it's time to start your homework."
- Make a short list of rules. Help your child understand the rules and what happens if he breaks them. As children get older, they can help make the rules and help decide what will happen if rules are broken.
- Build independence. Use routines so your child can do things on his own.
- Make a daily schedule. Include school, play, homework, TV, meals, baths, and bedtime.

## **How do I prevent problems?**

- Take steps to prevent misbehavior. Set up your child to behave well.
- Avoid situations that make your child cranky, tired, bored, or overly active.
- Think ahead. For example, keep paint out of your toddler's reach. Tell your school-age child you want a phone call when he walks to a friend's house and arrives.

## **What can I do when behavior is bad?**

- When behavior is bad, respond by teaching your child how to be good. Show him the right way to do something so the next time, he will know how to act.
- Using physical punishment, such as spanking or hitting, is the least effective response. Hitting may stop behavior but it doesn't teach the right behavior.
- Use other ways to discipline your child as often as you can:

### **Natural Consequences**

- Natural consequences work well. What happens after a rule is broken should make sense.
- Use the least extreme response that will be effective.
- Instead of spanking a child who doesn't pick up his toys, take them away for a time or have him pick them up.
- A toddler may refuse to put his coat on during a cold winter morning. Take the coat with you as you leave. When the toddler gets cold, he will want his coat. Let him wear it.

### **Ignore bad behavior**

- Children like to have their parents' attention. Even negative attention can be rewarding.
- Try ignoring bad behavior instead of responding to it.
- Your child might act up more when first ignored. Wait. He will probably stop.
- Give your immediate attention and praise to a child who is behaving well. Sit down and talk to the child seated quietly at the dinner table while ignoring the child who runs around the room. Give the other child attention when he chooses to join you.
- It is easiest to ignore behavior when you can wait for it to stop. Dangerous behavior shouldn't be ignored.
- If the behavior needs to stop at once, consider using time-out.

### **Use time-out**

- Tell your child ahead of time what behaviors will put him in time-out. Time-out works well after tantrums or aggressive and dangerous behavior.
- Warn the child that he will go to time-out if he doesn't behave. Do not get angry. If one warning doesn't make him stop, put him in time-out.
- Choose a place that is boring but not scary for your child to sit. Have him sit in a chair or face a corner. Away from home, use a car, restroom, or have him face a wall. Always stay close enough to see or hear him but don't talk to him.
- You may set a timer to help the child keep track of his time. Time-out should be short (about one minute for each year of age).
- If the child leaves, take him gently back to the time-out area. You may want to start the time over.
- When time is up, don't talk about the bad behavior. Either show him what you would like him to do instead or reward him the next time he shows good behavior.

### **What can I do when behavior is good?**

- Reward your child for good behavior with affection, praise, and attention. Rewards do not have to be bought.
- Rewards can be small, such as a hug, an extra story at bedtime, staying up 30 minutes later, a special snack, or time alone with Mom or Dad when a sibling isn't around.
- Consider letting the child choose the reward.
- Do not promise a child a reward you can't give.

- Tell your child exactly what they did well. Say, "Thank you for remembering to set the table," instead of, "Good job."

### **How can I improve my child's behavior?**

- Ask your child a question, such as, "What should you be doing now?" He will probably correct himself. If he can't answer, help him understand what you expect.
- Make a game out of a task or chore. If your child is slow getting ready for bed, set a timer. Challenge him to make it under the covers before time is up.
- Teach self-control. Give choices within a task or rule. For example, a child can choose what book to read before bed. A teen can decide how she wants to use 30 minutes of phone time.
- Don't try to correct everything at once. Choose one or two things for your child to work on.
- Give your child time to learn. Behavior may change slowly. For example, ask your child to play quietly for 10 minutes. Reward him if he does. After a few days, increase the time to 15 minutes. This time, only reward him if he plays quietly for 15 minutes. Continue.
- Your child could earn points toward a reward or privilege. Use a chart to show him how he's doing. If he behaves, give him a star (10 stars earns him a reward). If your child misbehaves, remind him once. If he doesn't correct his behavior, do not punish him but tell him that he will not get a star.

### **Quick Answers**

- Make instructions clear and firm. Show your child how to do what you ask.
- Avoid situations that make your child cranky, tired, bored, or overly active.
- Show your child the right way to do something instead of disciplining him.
- Give attention to good behavior and ignore the bad.
- Choose one or two things for your child to work on at a time.

### **References**

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