



Guiding Young Children Series: Relationships Come First – Then Look at Discipline

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Discipline is one of the biggest problems that every parent faces. You have probably wondered, “Did I do the right thing?” or “Why doesn’t my child obey me?”

This series of lessons was prepared for parents who want to do a better job of guiding their children and gain the desired result—good behavior. These lessons are for parents of young children, ages one to six. However, some suggested methods also are appropriate for older children. The titles of the lessons in this series are:

- T-2324 Your Relationship Comes First - Then Look at Discipline
- T-2325 Why Children Misbehave
- T-2326 Preventing Misbehavior
- T-2327 Responses to Misbehavior
- T-2328 Encouraging Self-Control
- T-2329 Discipline Without Punishment

Being effective with discipline and guidance is a challenge. Being a good parent is hard work. The discipline methods in these lessons may or may not work for your family. However, until you try them, you will not know what works for your situation. If one suggestion is not effective, try another. Reading these lessons will help improve how you discipline your child. Your child is fortunate that you are learning some positive discipline techniques.

Your style of parenting is influenced by what you remember from your own parents, what friends do and what is on social media. There are many other ideas to try, such as attending parenting classes. As a first step, try the things you learn from these fact sheets. Positive methods work and you feel better when using them.

Build a Strong Bond

Before specific discipline techniques are discussed, it is stressed that effective discipline begins with a warm, caring relationship. Discipline works best when parents and children give and receive affection frequently, and the child feels secure in the parent’s love. Children are more likely to cooperate with a parent who loves and protects them. They are less likely to act out for attention when parents pay attention to them and are more likely to respect others when they feel respected. Your children need to know how important they are to you. There are many ways to show your child love.

- Loving words – say “I love you” often and compliment

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frequently: “you are awesome,” “you make me smile,” “it’s fun to do things with you!”

- Physical affection— give plenty of hugs and kisses, gentle touches, pats on the back, back rubs or hold hands.
- Respect— treat your child as you would want to be treated; speak to them with kind words; do not use sarcasm or insults; try to see their point of view; align your expectations with child’s age, ability and personality; apologize when you make a mistake; and use good manners.
- Involvement – support and be involved in your child’s interests, attend parent-teacher conferences, read with your child, help with homework, attend your child’s special events and know your child’s friends and their parents.
- Praise and encouragement— tell your child when they are doing well and when you are proud of their efforts; say “I’m proud of you,” “you are so creative,” “you have great ideas” and “thank you.”
- Patience— remain calm during communications with your child, give your child time to respond and listen without interruption.



Building a positive relationship with your child is the first step toward effective discipline.

- Responding to child's emotions – label emotions, provide comfort and understanding, suggest alternatives and help the child problem-solve.

What is Discipline?

Discipline is:

- Teaching children responsibility.
- Showing a child how to get along with family and friends.
- Developing a child's self-control so the child wants to do what is right – not just to avoid punishment.
- Encouraging a child to be independent

Parents want children to behave properly even when they not around. We want children to think for themselves and take care of themselves. As parents, we want to raise responsible, confident, well-behaved children. Discipline helps children learn to care about others and to live satisfying and useful lives.

Isn't Discipline Punishment?

Discipline and punishment are different. Positive discipline is teaching and showing children correct behavior, while respecting and encouraging their developing skills. We want children to be responsible for their own behavior. Some think that discipline is teaching a child to mind or that discipline is what we apply when a child is naughty and behaves badly.

Effective discipline is a way we help a child learn self-control, and know what to do and when to do it. Punishment is using an unpleasant experience or making a child feel ashamed to try to change a child's behavior. It may stop bad behavior for the moment, but does not teach children about the good behavior expected of them. Punishment builds anger and resentment.

What do you want your child to be like?

Think ahead a few years and check some of the attributes you would like your child to have.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Has initiative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reserved | <input type="checkbox"/> Assertive | <input type="checkbox"/> Joyful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic | <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> Neat and orderly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Generous | <input type="checkbox"/> Obedient | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loving | <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Open-minded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Conforming | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-disciplined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Considerate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Persevering | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong-willed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polite | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-adjusted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Truthful | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-rounded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependent | <input type="checkbox"/> Interdependent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Popular | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Productive |

Give this some careful thought. What can you do as a parent now to help your child accomplish these goals? Listed below are several things that research findings associate with success:

1. Self-confidence and self-worth.
2. Independent thinking and problem solving skills.
3. Self-control.

4. Getting along well with others, being caring and empathetic.
5. A sense of responsibility.

It is important to keep in mind the goals for your child. Doing this will aid in remembering the important things to teach your child, and help decide the type of discipline to use. You can influence your child in the appropriate ways to achieve those goals.

Types of Discipline

Strict discipline uses many rules and punishments. The children do not have any say in the decision-making process. The rules and punishments are set by the parents. Children are not allowed to ask questions or make suggestions. Many of the rules are arbitrarily set by the adults. This sort of discipline can be rigid and harsh and not reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop at different ages. Authoritarian adults with a high need to be in control often use strict discipline methods.

Positive discipline considers the child's age and development (see "What to Expect of a Young Child" on page 3). Children and parents work together to decide the rules necessary for the well-being of the whole family. Children become involved in the decision-making process. Deciding the consequences for not following the rules helps children understand cause and effect. When parents need to take control, they do so firmly, with dignity and respect for the child's feelings and ideas. The rules change to suit the child's age and ability. The rules reflect family beliefs, interests and culture.

Permissive discipline puts children in control. No rules are set by the parent because the child makes all rules and decisions, thus, the household revolves around the child. Parents who choose this type of discipline may view children as free spirits, be too busy with other things or not understand how children grow and develop.

Each type of discipline can also vary as to rigidity, harshness and consistency. Some adults are very strict and continuously correct and punish children. Some parents vary their strictness according to their goals for the child, the child's needs and the family's values. For example, they may be strict about bedtime but permissive about how late the child stays awake and reading in bed.

Positive Discipline:

1. is teaching and showing children correct behavior, while respecting and encouraging their developing skills.
2. helps children learn to do what is right because they want to, not because they fear punishment.
3. is moderate, neither very strict nor very permissive.
4. suits today's world and today's children.
5. meets goals for the future.
6. reflects your beliefs and values.
7. respects the uniqueness of each child.
8. considers the child's age, ability, interests, family background and need to play.

Effects of Discipline

1. Strict discipline - children may become timid, withdrawn, dependent or rebellious and defiant.
2. Permissive - children may become spoiled, cranky, crying and expect to get their own way.
3. Positive discipline - children become responsible, cooperative and considerate people. They develop a positive self-concept.

Most parents use the style of discipline their parents used, with the idea of "I turned out okay." The problem – our world is rapidly changing. Today's children live with much more diversity, information and independence. They must learn to make responsible decisions. They need to know why there are certain rules, so they can apply the rules in other situations. Children treated with respect and dignity can stand up for what they know to be right. Extreme types of discipline do not work with children today. Strict and permissive types of discipline do not produce the kind of adults our complex nation and world need.

The use of positive discipline is described in this series. Positive discipline is based on research, common sense and knowledge about how children grow and learn. Parents and children are usually much happier using positive discipline.

Know Your Child

Each child is unique. Discipline techniques work differently, depending on the temperaments of the child and parent.

Read the following temperaments and related characteristics. Which one best describes your child's traits?

A difficult child:

- shrieks rather than cries.
- is upset by new people or places.
- is irregular in eating and sleeping habits.
- has violent temper fits.

An easy-going child:

- is generally cheerful.
- responds agreeably to new people, places and foods.
- has regular eating and sleeping habits.

A timid child:

- withdraws from new situations.
- adapts to changes slowly.

A bright child:

- is easily bored and finds their own entertainment.
- questions and thinks of exceptions to rules.
- pays close attention to adult role models.

A creative child:

- thinks of new and different rules.
- finds clever ways around rules and consequences.
- has serious problems with strict discipline.

Children are all unique individuals. Some are persistent; others give up easily. Some are active; others sit still. Some talk a lot; others are quiet. What works for one of your children may not work for another. Parents need to recognize and be aware of individual differences. Consider each child's temperament when selecting discipline techniques.

Discipline techniques need to keep pace with children's age and abilities. As parents, ask yourself: "Are my expecta-

What to Expect of a Young Child:

Infant (0 to 2 years):

- Cries to communicate needs
- Relies on adults to calm them
- Craves schedules and routines
- Explores the world by touching, tasting, seeing, hearing and smelling
- Needs physical affection for brain development and health
- May drop or throw objects
- May shy away from or reject new people

Toddler (1 to 3 years):

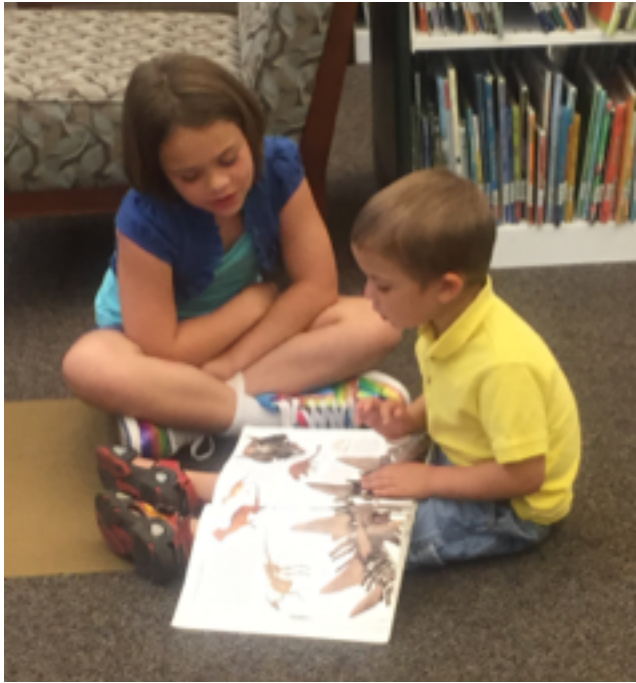
- Plays by him/herself
- Demands independence
- Says "no" often
- Helps in dressing and grooming
- Develops fears (dark, storms)
- May display aggression
- Defends possessions
- May throw temper tantrums
- Gets into everything

Preschooler (3 to 5 years):

- Plays with others
- Learns to cooperate and share
- Enjoys pretending
- May still have some meltdowns
- Can follow simple directions
- Understands reasons
- Appreciates choices
- Tries to please
- Asks many questions

School-aged (6 to 12 years):

- Spends more time away from family
- Gradually becomes more independent
- Able to dress and groom self without help
- Tries out many activities and keeps busy
- Likes collecting things
- Friends become more and more important
- May be jealous of others
- Enjoys competitive activities



A child's curiosity should be encouraged through all stages of development.

tions reasonable for a child of this age and with these abilities?"
 "Am I expecting too much?"

Be familiar with what is normal for a child at each age and know characteristic behaviors for a child's age and abilities. For example, we cannot expect a two-year-old to sit still and be quiet. Young children need to be active. A child care provider and other early childhood professionals can help you and other adults in your child's life understand normal growth and development. Behavior found bad or annoying may be normal for a child of that age.

Young children have a difficult time telling the difference between fact and pretend. If a child says, "I saw a bear," an adult may think the young child is lying or is afraid. Actually, the child is behaving normally. The best adult response is to agree that it is fun and safe to pretend. In a few years, the child will know the difference between reality and imaginary. Children are curious. They may take things apart to see how they work, not to annoy parents. Curiosity is a valuable tool for learning. Rather than punishing a child for taking things apart, provide something to satisfy curiosity.

A Record of my Discipline Practices

Place a check every time you give your child one of the following:

- _____ Hug
- _____ Kiss
- _____ Pat on the back or shoulder
- _____ Smile
- _____ Said "I love you"
- _____ Play together
- _____ Your undivided attention
- _____ Said "please" and "thanks"

Check the blanks that apply to you and try to increase the starred (**) discipline strategies.

The way I usually disciplined this week was:

- _____ Compare one child with another
- _____ Explain reasons calmly**
- _____ Ignore misbehavior**
- _____ Isolate the child from others
- _____ Let the child make choices and experience consequences**
- _____ Praise**
- _____ Prevent misbehavior before it occurs**
- _____ Remove privileges
- _____ Scold
- _____ Shame the child
- _____ Show disapproval
- _____ Spank
- _____ Threaten and not follow through
- _____ Threaten and follow through
- _____ Yell and scream
- _____ Redirect child's attention**

During the past week I:	More	Less	Same
Acted calmly	_____	_____	_____
Acted firmly with kindness	_____	_____	_____
Let my child learn from consequences	_____	_____	_____
Used kind words	_____	_____	_____
Used unkind words	_____	_____	_____
The atmosphere in our home has changed to one of the following:			
	More	Less	Same
Confusion	_____	_____	_____
Cooperation	_____	_____	_____
Friendliness	_____	_____	_____
Fun	_____	_____	_____
Hostility	_____	_____	_____
Tension	_____	_____	_____
Understanding	_____	_____	_____

Adapted from Practical Education for Parenting by Kent G. Hamdorf, Extension Specialist, Human Relations Family Development, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, 1978.

See How Much You Have Learned

Which of the following statements are true and which are false?

1. Sharon, age 4, wants to stay up and watch an adult movie on TV that starts at 9:00 p.m. Mother says, "This movie isn't for children, and you need your sleep. You will be tired tomorrow, but you decide." Mother is using a permissive style of discipline.
2. Bryant, age 6, is late for dinner. Father said, "You know you are supposed to be home at 6 p.m. No TV tonight for you." Father is using a strict style of discipline.
3. Maria, age 5, forgot to empty the wastebasket. Mother said, "Maria, please remember that it is your job to empty the wastebasket this week." Mother is using a positive style of discipline.
4. A child who seeks attention is a spoiled child.
5. When children make mistakes, they should be scolded and told how dumb and no-good they are.

Practice Exercises

1. Study the styles of discipline and decide what kind you use. Probably one style one time, and another style on a different occasion. Or perhaps you are half-way between two styles. Think about the kind of discipline styles you would like to have.
2. Make an effort to notice what your child is doing well or right and compliment them on those things when you see them.
3. Make a list of 5 to 10 things you love about your child on a separate sheet of paper. Set aside a time to share those things with your child.

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Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

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- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
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- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

Credit is extended to Elaine Wilson, retired Parenting Specialist for the original development of this fact sheet and Debbie Richardson for subsequent adaptations.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 000 cents per copy.