

CLASS DISCUSSION-THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

1. **Set Limits.**

Letting children control themselves is not the same as letting them do whatever they want to do. Be sure they understand what the limits are. What things are not allowed? How do you know what to allow and what not to allow?

The limits should be important, not just arbitrary rules set up to show who is the boss. They should also not be those you have no intention of enforcing.

2. **Be firm and consistent.**

If it was not all right to do yesterday, it is not all right to do it today.

Consistency is more important than how strict or lenient a parent is.

Children should know what to expect.

Don't make threats:

"If you don't stop running through the store I'm going to put you in the car," and then not do it. Or, after driving for 14 hours across the desert to Disneyland saying, "If you don't stop fighting this instant, we are going to turn right around and go home."

What threats have you heard your parents make that you just ignored because you knew they didn't mean what they were saying?

3. **Substitute acceptable activities for unacceptable activities.**

Childproof your house when your children are small. Have toys available to play with rather than treasures they cannot touch.

Distraction works well for young children.

Tell them what they can do, say "Run and yell outside, not in the living room."

4. **Give reasons for good behavior.**

Do not just say, "Because I said so."

If you were driving down a long boring road with no other traffic in sight and a sign suddenly said to reduce your speed to 25 miles per hour for no visible reason, would you do it or want to do it? What if the sign also said there was a sharp turn ahead with a steep drop-off on one side. Now would you reduce your speed? What if the next time you traveled that road, the sign was missing. Would you still reduce your speed?

Giving children reasons along with rules helps them learn to use their own control rather than waiting for an adult to tell them what to do. They internalize standards for behavior and become more responsible.

5. **Focus on good behavior.**

Give them hugs for being nice.

Avoid attention for poor behavior, ignoring them when that is possible.

Catch them doing something good rather than scolding them for misbehaving.

6. **Use routines to help children know what to expect and manage their own behavior.**

In which of the following cases would it be easier for parents to get their four-year-old to go to bed?

a. At bedtime say, "It is time to go to bed, now. Put everything away and get to bed. I will give you to the count of ten. One. two. ."

b. One-half hour before bedtime, say, "It is time to put on your pajamas now and play something quiet." Then at bedtime, "Brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, get a drink of water and I will meet you in your bed for a bedtime story." After one story and some kisses and hugs, turn off the light and walk out of the room. Establish when chores must be completed. This will eliminate arguing about when the chores must be done.

7. Match the consequence to the offense (the crime to the punishment).

Natural consequences (easiest but hardest for parents to do). It means that you let whatever follows poor behavior happen.

If they do not eat, what happens? (hunger)

If they miss the bus and live a mile from school? (walk)

If they tip over a cup of their favorite pop while misbehaving (no more drink)

If they leave their baseball cards outside? (the weather could ruin them)

However, sometimes it is not appropriate to let the natural consequences follow. You may not be willing to let a bike get backed over in the driveway to teach a lesson. And certainly you are not going to say, "I told you not to stand too close to that cliff" now that you have fallen over.

When a natural consequence is not appropriate, you use a logical consequence.

Logical consequences are demonstrations of logical results of misbehavior. It is imposed by the parents. For example:

When Andrea stays out later than her agreed upon curfew she is grounded.

When Ryan paints on the back of the house, he has to scrub it off.

When Michelle leaves her toys all over the floor after being told to pick them up, she has to earn them back with extra jobs.

8. Give children choices.

Either-Or choices let the child know what the logical consequence is going to be:

Either you _____ or you _____. You decide.

Either you play quietly in the living room or go outside to play. You decide.

Either you pet the puppy gently or you put him back in his box. You decide.

When-Then choices help children develop responsibility and pair responsibility with privileges.

When you have _____ then you may _____.

When you have cleaned your room, then you may invite a friend over.

When you have finished your homework, then you may play with your friends.

9. Be a good model.

Your children will be more polite and courteous if they hear you say thank you and please to them. If you do not want your children to swear, be messy, smoke, take drugs, etc., then you must also avoid doing those things. Children will do what you do, not what you tell them to do.

A two-year-old and his father:

"Brandon, come in the house now."

"No, I'm playing in the leaves."

"Brandon, I said come in the house now!"

"No! I'm playing in the leaves."

"Dammit! Get in this house right now!"

"Dammit! I'm playing in the leaves!"

10. Treat children as responsible individuals.

Remember the self-fulfilling prophecy: Children become what you believe they are.

Treating children as if they are responsible increases their level of responsibility.

Treat a child with respect to gain respect.

You may expand on this information by bringing in further information that is available about positive guidance. An excellent article is titled "The Guidance Approach to Discipline" by Deb Gebeke, Family Science Specialist, July 1996. North Dakota State University granted me permission for use of the information from this article at <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/famsci/fs468w.htm> for the education, non-commercial purpose of being in the curriculum.

An interesting non-academic article titled "Goodkids: A Basic Parenting Guide" can be found at <http://home.flash.net/~goodkids>). You could also use articles such as these for **Option 6**.