

CONSEQUENCES

A consequence is the effect or result of an earlier occurrence. In many instances, consequences that are appropriate to the situation can be utilized by parents or caregivers to guide behavior.

A natural consequence is a direct result of a specific behavior. This type of consequence occurs naturally if no one interferes. For example, a child who oversleeps will miss the bus and have to walk to school.

Natural consequences are the best teachers that a child can have. If a child does something that results in unpleasant consequences, he/she will not want to repeat the act. If the child does something that results in pleasant consequences, then he/she will want to repeat the act.

For example, if a child forgets to take his/her lunch to school, he/she will have to go without lunch and will probably be very hungry at the end of the day. This will cause the child to remember the lunch in the future. When he/she remembers the lunch, he/she will be able to eat it and will feel better at the end of the day. These pleasant consequences will cause the child to continue that behavior.

Some natural consequences are too severe for the child to experience, and a parent or caregiver must intervene. For example, a child who runs out into the street would be hit by a car. This consequence is too severe. In this instance, the caregiver could utilize a logical consequence.

A logical consequence is an imposed consequence that is directly related to the behavior. Besides being used when a natural consequence would be too harmful or dangerous, it is also used when rules of the home or classroom are broken.

There are four rules to remember when applying logical consequences:

1. The consequence must logically follow the act. It must be related to the undesired behavior. For example: You have just found Johnny playing outside. He is covered from head to foot in mud. The logical consequence would be to make him wash off in the house, clean up in the bathroom, and stay in the house for a while.
2. The consequence cannot be imposed in anger. This also is interpreted as punishment. Even a good consequence can be made negative depending on how it is administered. If Sarah is hitting Caleb and screaming at him, it will not work well for you to yell at her and spank her. Simply remove her from the situation and get her involved in a quiet activity.
3. The consequence must make the child feel as though it is an unpleasant result of behavior. The consequence should be given, and then let the child feel its effects without further comment from the adult. Reminding the child of what is happening will only cause resentment. Wayne made cookies as a surprise for his family. He forgot that he needed to clean up the kitchen after he was finished baking. When mother got home, she complimented Wayne on the delicious cookies he had made, then made him come in from playing basketball to clean up the mess. Mother went about her business, and Wayne went about his business. No argument or harsh words were spoken.
4. The consequence should be short enough in duration and specific enough to have an impact on the child. A brief restriction is more successful than a longer one. If a child takes a toy from another child, she should return the toy to the other child and have a short (1-5 minute) time-out. Restricting her play for the rest of the day is inappropriate.

Have students complete the activity sheet. Using these four rules and definitions given, list a probable natural consequence that would not be appropriate, and identify a logical consequence that would be appropriate.