

Positive Discipline of Young Children

Disciplining young children

The purpose of discipline is to teach children about the rules and values of our society and to help them become self-disciplined so that they are happy, responsible adults.

Peel Children's Aid believes that positive discipline techniques should be used rather than spanking or other forms of physical discipline that can result in physical, emotional and developmental harm. Even verbal scolding can emotionally harm a child. Comments such as "you're bad," for example, can harm a child's sense of self worth.

Building relationships

Before you can work on discipline issues with your child, you have to build a relationship of love and trust.

Infancy is the best time to build a relationship with your baby, but it's never too late to start. Build the parent-child relationship by using loving, gentle touches, spending time together, respecting your child's feelings, keeping your promises, apologizing when necessary and having fun together.

Developing a routine

Daily routines help children of all ages feel safe and secure. Keep mealtimes, bed time activities and weekly activities similar to create consistency in the child's life.

The end of the day is a high stress time for parents and children. This is when most confrontations occur. Avoid an end-of-day-crisis by keeping a routine just before bed which may include spending some quiet time with your child to help them unwind.

Tips to keep in mind

Young children have short memories. Gently remind them about the rules to help them learn.

Give your child a toy or another activity to distract them from not following the rules.

Redirecting and tantrums

If your child is frustrated or unable to solve a problem, try a different activity. This will help reduce the likelihood of a tantrum.

If your child begins to lose control, move close and put your arm around them.

If holding the child makes them more angry, let go, remain calm, wait until your child calms down.

Tantrums are frightening for children. Be ready to comfort them afterwards.

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Consequences

Safe Situations

Let children experience the consequences of their actions if it is safe to do so.

For example, "If you can't play with the blocks without throwing them, then they'll be put away."

Follow through and put the blocks away if the child continues to throw them.
This helps them learn consequences for their actions.

Unsafe Situations

If your child is doing something unsafe, remove him or her from the situation and explain consequences later.

For many parents, seeing their child running into traffic could cause them to run, grab the child and spank them. Research shows that this doesn't prevent the situation from happening in the future.

After the child is safe, simply explain to the child about the danger. This is more likely to result in the child learning about safety than physical punishment.

Time-out

If a child just refuses to behave or follow the rules, give him or her a time out. It's an effective technique for children two to 12 years of age. Follow these steps:

- 1) Take the child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down.
- 2) Explain that he or she is having a time out because of misbehaviour.
- 3) When the child feels ready to try again, bring the child back to play.
- 4) Praise the child's first acceptable behaviour after the time out.

Preventing misbehaviour

Getting Started

Make your home a safe place for your child to play and explore.
Keep dangerous and precious objects out of reach.
Take toys and snacks when going out.
Don't let your child get too hungry, tired or bored.

Make fair and simple rules

Set clear limits on your child's behaviour with a few, simple rules.
Focus on safety. The rules should allow children to explore and learn in a safe way.
Ignore or accept minor incidences.

Communicate

Make sure your child understands what you expect.
Explain the reason for the rule if the child is old enough.
Listen to what your child tells you.

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Be Positive

Focus on what to do, instead of what not to do.

Positive language makes it more likely that your children will respond positively.

Teasing, name calling and insults can hurt as much as hitting. Don't compare your child negatively to other children.

Give children time to respond

Children don't like to stop doing things they enjoy.

Give them five minutes notice that they'll have to shut off the TV and go to bed or put their toys away for dinner.

Be a good role model

Live what you teach. For example, don't hit a child for hitting someone else.

Resources for parents

Being a parent is the most important job you will do. Some parents like to meet other parents, learn new skills, keep up to date on the latest parenting advice and some need assistance.

To find out more about the resources available to you, contact your local health unit or ask your doctor about groups and resources in your area. Or call the Parents Help Line at 1-888-603-9100 or Peel Children's Aid.

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