

## Discipline

Every child needs discipline. The word discipline actually means "to teach." Discipline means guiding the child to know right from wrong, good from bad. Helping children learn these differences is one of the main responsibilities of parents. Knowing what to do and what not to do helps give children a sense of order and helps them develop good feelings about themselves. This means having family rules.

Babies and young children do not know the difference between right and wrong. Young children operate on the "gimme principle." They want things **right now!** As children grow older, they learn to wait and have patience. With your guidance, they also learn to tell right from wrong. Discipline should help the child to understand it is the behavior that is bad - not the child himself.

### Rewards and Punishment

**Rewards** are positive results for following family rules and for doing the right thing. Praise your child when he or she does something right. Children want to please their parents out of love and respect. But if you pay attention to your child only when he does something wrong, your child learns to do bad things to get your attention. Rewarding good behavior encourages the child to repeat the good behavior.

Cost-free rewards can include:

- A later bedtime for one night
- A trip to the park
- Special one-on-one time with a parent

**Punishment** is a negative result of doing something wrong or failing to do something right. A child is punished so the bad behavior will be less likely to happen again. The purpose of punishment should never be to hurt the child. Spanking, paddling or hitting only teaches a child physical force is the best way to solve problems. The child may learn to fear the punishment but may not understand why his actions were wrong. The child does not learn to understand the consequences (results) of his actions. Tell your child what you want him to do. Be simple and direct.



**Picture 1** Rewards are positive results for doing the right thing.

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## Rewards and Punishment, continued

Some ways to punish without using physical force include:

- Loss of privileges (TV, play, sports, music)
- "Grounding" - child must stay home or in his room for a specific period of time.
- Fines (or a decrease in allowance)
- Extra household chores
- "Time out" alone, in a quiet place – one minute per year of age.

## Steps to Effective Discipline

- Ask the child if what he did was against your rules.
- Ask the child to think about his actions.
- Together, you and your child need to work out a plan so the child can do better.
- Tell your child you will not accept anything except a change in behavior or actions.
- If there is not a change in the child's behavior, explain there will be certain consequences (results) for breaking rules. Tell the child what these consequences will be. Then be sure to follow through if the child breaks the rules.

## Do's for Discipline

- DO take a deep breath and think before you discipline.
- DO talk about your own feelings and needs.
- DO state the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules. DO take action.
- DO be fair. Make the punishment fit the behavior
- DO talk about your child's feelings and needs.
- DO be consistent with your child.
- DO praise your child when he does something right. Give your child a hug.
- DO be a good role model. Children learn from your actions.

## Don'ts for Discipline

- DON'T react to your child from anger.
- DON'T yell or scream. Be calm.
- DON'T shame your child or compare him to another.
- DON'T call your child names.
- DON'T criticize or blame your child.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Talking with Your Child**

Raising children can be a challenging job. But if parents take the time to teach their child about right and wrong and use discipline fairly and consistently, this job will be easier. Many children like to talk about situations that do not relate to them. For example, you could say "Did you hear about what this child did? What do you think about that kind of behavior?" This gives you an opportunity to teach your child about that situation before it happens to him.

Keeping the lines of communication open with your child is probably the best thing a parent can do to raise a responsible child.