

Parenting and Positive Discipline

Imagine how much more mutually rewarding and effective your relationship with your child might be if there wasn't so much negative emotion involved.

At your wits end trying to manage YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR?

Parenting doesn't need to be a war between you and your child. Effective discipline is proactive, and it encourages positive actions and personal responsibility. It promotes your child's self-esteem and strengthens relationships between you, your child and their siblings.

WHY CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Kids truly do mean well and do their best to behave. Sometimes they will fall short of our behavioral expectations. There are several factors contributing to both your child's behavior and your reaction. Consider the following:

- What is the specific behavior?
- How do you feel about it?
- What is your personality type? Your child's?
- Why do you think they're behaving this way?

- Where is the behavior occurring? Who is there when it happens?
- Is anything impacting or preventing your response to it?

ACTION STEPS

Positive discipline trains children to behave without resorting to bribes, threats, yelling, or even physical actions. The following strategies will help you channel your child's energy (and yours) into a more desirable outcome:

- ✓ **Refrain from saying "no"** – There's something about being told "no" that makes children (or adults) want to do something all the more. Instead, offer an alternative.
- ✓ **Control yourself** – Children watch their parents. You're modeling for them what is acceptable. If you yell, they will also. Take steps to remain calm and keep the situation from escalating.
- ✓ **Consistency** – We sometimes overlook or address behaviors based on the situation and our own energy level. This can confuse a child. Be clear and consistent with expectations.
- ✓ **Good behavior counts** – Too often we give our kids more attention when they misbehave. When we choose to ignore negative behaviors and highlight a good behavior instead, we show our kids what we truly value.
- ✓ **Avoid bribery** – When we offer our children bribes as incentives, they don't associate good behavior as the reward itself. Help your child see that good behavior and choices bring their own rewards.

- ✓ **Give options** – There's nothing wrong with giving your child choices. For example, if a child is fighting with their sibling, explain to them you only have enough energy to either listen to their squabble or do something fun later.
- ✓ **Rewards** – Incentives can be powerful motivators for positive behavior.
- ✓ **Responsibility** – Trusting children to take care of certain tasks should be seen as a privilege. Responsibility is a reward in itself. When it is framed this way, children will naturally desire to behave in a positive manner to gain more responsibilities.
- ✓ **Your attention** – Giving a child your love, understanding and attention is the best reward for them. Setting aside time every day to spend with your child is the best way to influence their lives.

KEEP IN MIND

Raising healthy, well-behaved children takes time, consistency and patience. Long-term habits in anyone's life require time, and children are no exception. The best results are not always immediate. Stick with it and continue reinforcing your commitment, and remember a licensed counselor or therapist can help you explore how to implement these methods. Loving your child is always a worthwhile investment with life-long returns.

What steps will you take today to learn and apply positive discipline techniques that work for you and your child?