



## Basic Discipline Techniques

As a parent of today, many of you are struggling to maintain your job, your home life, your finances and discipline for your children. Often parents of this generation are not prepared to discipline because they want “quality” time with their children and the juggling of career, family, and personal needs, interferes with having the time to discipline. The purpose of this tip is to outline basic discipline techniques.

No one escapes frustration or disappointment, neither will our children. Without discipline we are not able to get to work on time or manage our busy lives. Why would our children be able to get through life without learning the principles of discipline? Disciplining our children is one way of giving them techniques to deal with these situations in the care of their loving family. If we do not discipline them, they will have to learn how to control their impulses through experiential learning. Experiential learning is losing jobs and/or spending time in the legal system because they were undisciplined. Give your children a great gift; teach them discipline.

### The six basic principles of discipline (the ABC's of Discipline):

- 1. Avoid Giving In:** When children whine or throw tantrums it is very tempting and often easier to give in so that the whining and tantrum stops. They learn that if they can push until you are frazzled, then you will give in. This is not the lesson you wish them to learn. Giving in to the desires that have caused the whining and tantrum will only cause more whining and more tantrums.
- 2. Attend to Good Behavior:** Always praise good behavior. Discipline is not just about punishment when something bad has been done. A great part of discipline is paying attention to good behavior and rewarding it. Rewards do not always have to be treats or toys, often personal praise comments show the child that you do pay attention and care about everything they do. “I was proud of you today.” “The way you handled that situation tells me you are growing up, that pleases me.” “Thanks for doing that.” These are simple comments that often can make a huge difference in your child’s behavior.
- 3. Be a Good Example:** Children learn best by example. If you deal with situations with anger and tantrums then you can expect your children to learn to deal with situations the same way. If your child makes you extremely mad, state the obvious, “I am angry because of what you did.” Remove the child from the situation, remove yourself as well, cool off, and then deal with the child. Parents should always punish their children in a matter of fact manner, calmly, coolly, and detached. You have the power, and by maintaining control you retain it, even when the child makes you mad. If you lose your cool, then the power shifts from you to the child and you cannot effectively accomplish any discipline when the child has the upper hand.



4. **Boundaries:** “Please behave” will never work as a command for any child. They need to know clearly what their limits are and what the expectations are for them. It is up to you to set and communicate these limits to your child. Do not be vague like “be careful” but instead say, “be gentle with your baby brother.” By 18 months of age it is important to begin setting limits for your child. Early on these are quite simple, “you are not to touch the CD or TV system.” Always be concrete. As the child gets older the limits will change, but the idea of limits will be set.
5. **Consequences:** just like with boundaries and limits, it needs to be clear as to the consequences that will occur for bad behavior. Nagging and lecturing do not work! Every parent that has gone before you has tried nagging and lecturing and it still NEVER works. A clear limit or rule should be followed by just as clear consequence. Long explanations about why you have a rule might be okay for some children but it should not replace the consequence.
6. **Consistency:** Once you make a rule and you tell your child what is at stake, you must follow through. If you make allowances then they will not take you seriously when you set a limit. Therefore be careful when you set a limit and consequence, make sure that you can follow through before you say it. Often parents use idle threats, knowing full well they would not do what they have threatened and then they lose all credibility with their child. Be consistent and predictable.

The types of discipline often come under question. Which is best? A military authoritative style, or a more accommodative loose style of discipline. This has been studied and we can learn a few things from the studies. First children are successful with either form of discipline. The key is predictability. If you are authoritative then you must sustain that style throughout your discipline years. If you are accommodative then that style should also be consistent. Therefore if you want to greatly limit the area with which good behavior occurs then you can be more of a military style parent. If you want the child to have a wider area of which to work from then an accommodative style will work best for you.

Studies do shed some light on outcomes. Long term, children become educated and live happy lives from either extreme styles of discipline. Children from more authoritative parents often perform better in school through high school than children who are from more accommodative parents, however long term success with education does not seem to be affected. Children who grow up with authoritative parents tend to have more anxiety and depression, but again long term that seems to even out by adulthood. Children who grow up in accommodative households tend to be more socially capable at an earlier age and seem more comfortable with themselves; again by adulthood these differences tend to decrease.

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