



TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT DISCIPLINE AND PROPER BEHAVIOR

Discipline is not mostly punishment. Discipline is teaching new behaviors--in yourself and your children. Children often do the same troubling things repeatedly because they do not know another way to act or because they do not know how to ask for what they really want or talk about what is bothering them. So, one of the main goals of discipline is to teach them a better way to behave and communicate. Discipline is also preventing misbehavior. These suggestions should help:

- The single most important part of discipline is to catch your child being good and let him know how proud you are ("You put on your shoes this morning--way to go!"). Use praise often; it motivates your child to want to behave well and to seek your approval. Every 5 to 10 minutes, try to catch your toddler being good, every 15 minutes or so for preschoolers, and every 30 minutes or so with older children.
- Spend some time every day doing things your child likes to do and that you like to do. A child who has special attention from her parents is less likely to misbehave.
- Childproof your house. Remove dangerous, breakable, and valuable objects from areas where you spend time with your young child so that constant nagging is not necessary. If possible, make your yard as safe and child-friendly as possible--get a fence, give away a dangerous dog, move lawn chemicals and equipment. If you cannot make changes in your yard or play area, take turns with other parents supervising children outside.
- Anticipate children's needs for activities. Have a list of things your child likes to do (you can create this together). When he is restless, or needs a new activity, go to the list and let him choose something. When driving long distances, even on the way to and from the grocery store, have some fun activities prepared like "I see something...", "20 Questions", drawing pads or books that are only for use in the car or bus.
- Rotate your child's toys. Keep some in a closet out of your child's reach and somewhere she can play with them. When she needs a new activity and is tired of the toys she has out, switch them with one of the ones in the closet.
- Distract young children from things you do not want them doing by starting another activity--getting out a different toy, reading a book with them, singing a song, etc.