



Disciplining children

Young children are normally impulsive with their feelings of frustration, and anger often exceeds their ability to control themselves. It is normal for children to test a rule by breaking it.

When you respond in a supportive, consistent way, you are helping your child feel safe in the world. Many approaches to setting limits can work as long as they are intended to help and teach children rather than punish them.

Disciplining your children inevitably will cause moments of disconnection where they feel upset by your disapproval. It is important for caregivers to repair the ruptured connection for a child to continue feeling loved and supported.

Keys to successful disciplining

- Communicate to your child what needs to be done at that moment.
“I know you’re having fun at the park, but it’s time to get ready to go now.”
- Redirect your child’s attention or activity by using neutral or positive language.
“It’s not okay to draw on the wall, but here is some paper you can use.”
- Say “No” while maintaining love.
“I love you, but I don’t like what you’re doing.”
- Give the reason for your rule.
“Don’t run with scissors, you might fall and hurt yourself.”
- Give limited tasks and be specific in your request.
“Please pick up your stuffed animals.” instead of “Please clean up your room.”
- Acknowledge children’s feelings, but set limits.
“I know you’re angry, but no biting.”
- Help children see how their actions affect others.
“Your sister is upset because you pinched her. How would you feel if she hurt you?”
- Help children see how they can use their words to communicate their feelings.
“Tell your brother you don’t like it when he hits you.”
- Acknowledge positive behavior.
“You did a good job picking up your stuffed animals. Thank you.”

Source: The “First Years Last Forever” pamphlet, sponsored by the Reiner Foundation, AT&T Families and Work Institute, Ad Council.

This information was provided by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, Ogden UT. (www.dontshake.com)



The Children’s Trust Fund’s *Positive Parenting: Tips on Discipline* booklet contains other suggestions to lead, guide, and teach children. The booklet is available online at <http://wctf.state.wi.us> or call 1-866-640-3936.

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