



Effective Discipline

What works for children, tweens, and teens.

Here are some effective discipline tips for younger children:

- Make rewards and consequences age and task appropriate.
- Be clear that you are not upset with the child, but with his or her behaviour.
- Be understanding and let the child know you want to improve his or her situation.
- Be patient, persistent, and really think through what you want to say and do.
- Give them advance notice and good reasons – children need to know what to expect.
- Reward good behaviour rather than focusing on bad behavior.
- Make a reasonable number of rules and stick to them.
- Follow through with consequences.

As children mature, the strategies you use for discipline need to change as well. For tweens and teens:

- Let teens experience the consequences of their actions.
- Trust teens with little things and give increasing responsibilities.
- Keep your sense of humour.
- Pick your battles wisely – changing their hair colour may be okay, but body piercing may not be.
- Be aware that “Do’s” make a stronger impression than “Don’ts.”
- Establish clear rules and limitations – if you can’t agree, try to find a creative compromise.
- Go easy on first offenses – talk about what the teen learned and how they could behave more appropriately next time.
- Be their parent, not best friend – let them know you’re not afraid to take control if things get out of hand.

Finally, it is important to remember that no matter what their age, children will test their parents and caregivers with bargaining, negotiating, and persuasive arguments. Remember your disciplinary goals, follow through with the consequences that you have established, and remind yourself to keep your cool and stay in control.



Effective discipline isn't about fear or force. It is a process of providing guidelines that help children learn appropriate behaviours and make good choices — and it is about treating children with the same care and respect with which you would want to be treated.

Whether you are disciplining your own or someone else's child, the tips presented here may help.



The bottom line

Children need discipline if they are to learn to function in a family and society that has rules by which we must all abide. In her best-selling book *Kids Are Worth It! Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline*, author Barbara Coloroso says discipline gives life to a child's learning in a way that punishment cannot. Specifically discipline shows kids what they have done, gives them ownership of a problem, gives them options for solving that problem, and leaves their dignity intact. She notes "discipline...deals with the reality of the situation, not with the power and control of the adult."

Want to improve your parenting skills? Check out our e-learning course *The Foundations of Effective Parenting* or call and enquire about our Plan Smart Childcare and Parenting Service for one-on-one coaching, advice and personalized information.

Disciplining a child who is not your own?

If you are asked to care for someone else's child (e.g. a niece, a neighbour's child), you may have some unique challenges in order to provide effective discipline.

Establish certain rules, especially those related to general safety, when the child first arrives and ensure they understand them.

If the child deliberately breaks a rule, calmly remind them that this action is not acceptable under your care (include your own children if they are involved).

If the behaviour continues, redirect the child's attention to a new activity or enforce a quiet "time out" (depending on the maturity level of the child).



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