

Discipline Without Hurting

Information for Parents of Young Children

How Can I Teach My Children Good Behaviour?

- Be prepared to work at it. Children may misbehave to test the limits and learn what kind of behaviour will be tolerated. (There are many other reasons children misbehave.)
- Teaching good behaviour takes times and patience
- Talk and listen to your children. Trust and communication are even more important as children grow older.

What If I Lose My Temper?

Parenting can be stressful at times but it is easier to cope when parents also take proper care of themselves. Try to get some exercise, healthy food and rest every day.

1. As soon as you realize that you are getting angry, stop what you are doing and make an effort to calm down
2. Take a few deep breaths to help regain your self-control. Wash your face or telephone a friend for support.
3. If you can find a reliable person to babysit for a few minutes, go for a walk.
4. After you calm down, think about what made you angry. What are the reasons behind your child's misbehaviour? Is there anything you can do to prevent this situation from happening again? Think about ways you can reduce the stress on you and your child.
5. Read the suggestions below for encouraging good behaviour and responding to misbehaviour.

Sometimes, I Worry About My Child's Behaviour

- When you have problems that you can't solve alone, it is okay to ask for help.
- Talk to other parents and child care experts in your community.
- Violent outbursts, setting fires, hurting pets and stealing are all signs of trouble. Get help with these problems from an expert before the problems get worse.

Adapted from the "Discipline Without Hurting" brochure written by Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services of Burnaby, COSTI Immigrant Services of Toronto and Child Welfare League of Canada

ENCOURAGE GOOD BEHAVIOUR

TRY THESE WAYS TO PREVENT MISBEHAVIOUR FROM HAPPENING IN THE FIRST PLACE

Getting started

- Make your home a safe place for your child to play in and explore.
- Keep forbidden and dangerous objects out of the reach of young children.
- Take toys and snacks when going out.
- Don't let your child get too hungry, tired or bored.

Make Fair and simple rules

- Set clear limits on your child's behaviour with a few, simple rules.
- Focus on safety. The rules should allow children to explore and learn in a safe way.

Communicate

- Make sure your child understands what you expect.
- Explain the reason for the rule if the child is old enough to understand.
- Listen to what your child tells you.

Be positive

- Focus on what to do, instead of what not to do.
- Positive language is more likely that children will respond positively. Instead of saying: "You can't watch television until you finish your school work," try saying "You can watch television after you finish your schoolwork."
- Teasing, name-calling and insults can hurt as much as hitting. Don't compare your child negatively to other children.

Give children time to respond

- Children don't like to stop doing things they enjoy. Give children a chance to prepare for change. For example, "In five minutes, it will be time to turn off the television and start your schoolwork."

Reward correct behaviour

- Praise and encourage your children when they behave. For example, "I like it when you help your little sister."
- Show your approval with hugs, kisses and smiles.
- Make sure that good behaviour gets more of your attention than bad behaviour.

Be a good role model

- Live what you teach. For example, it doesn't make sense to hit a child for hitting someone else.

Ignore minor incidents

- Learn to accept some noise, clutter and attention-seeking behaviour.
- Remember, mistakes happen.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD MISBEHAVES - THINK BEFORE YOU ACT.

With Babies:

- Never shake or toss a baby, even playfully. A baby's neck is weak and shaking can result in brain damage or death.
- Respond to your baby's crying. Babies cry to communicate their needs, such as for food, comfort or a clean diaper.
- Develop a daily routine around feeding, sleeping and playing to help your baby feel safe and secure.
- Encourage your baby to trust you. Show your love and affection. Cuddle, talk and sing to your baby.
- Babies are too young to understand limits and rules.

With One- and Two-Year-Olds:

Remind

- Young children have short memories. Gently remind them about the rules to help them learn.

Distract

- Give your child a toy or another activity to do.

Gentle Touch and Tantrums

- If your child begins to lose control, move close and put your arm around the child. (This is also a good way to deal with hitting, biting, or kicking.)

With Two- and Three-Year-Olds:

Redirect

- If your child is frustrated and unable to solve a problem, try a different activity.
- For example, take a restless child outside for some physical activity.

Consequences

- Let children experience the consequences of their actions if it is safe to do so. For example, "If you can't play with the blocks without throwing them, the blocks will be put away." Then follow through and put the blocks away if the child continues to throw the blocks.
- If your child is doing something unsafe, you can explain the consequences later, but remove your child from danger immediately.

With Older Children

Problem solving and making choices help prepare children for their teenage years.

Offer Choices

- Choices help children learn how to make decisions. Offer simple choices, but don't threaten. For example, "You can wash the dishes or dry them. You decide."

Teaching Problem Solving

1. Help your child define the problem. Ask questions, such as "what would happen if you tried to ...?"
2. Together think of some solutions.
3. Choose the best one.
4. Try it.
5. Afterwards, talk about what worked and what you could try next time.

Solve Problems Together

- As children approach the teen years, they still need clear limits but parents should be willing to negotiate a little.
- When children start thinking for themselves, their talking back may anger you. However, to keep communicating, parents must do more listening and more explaining with older children.
- Talk to the parents of your child's friends about reasonable limits on clothing and curfews.
- Work with your children to solve problems

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