

Don't Take It Out On Your Kids: A Parent's and Teacher's Guide to Positive Discipline

by Katharine C. Kersey

LEARNING HOW TO BE GOOD PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Children come into this world helpless and unable to thrive without us. Our job is to love and nurture them and to teach them how to live.

Discipline means "to teach and train". We need to be good disciplinarians, to acquire skills that will accomplish the goal we set for ourselves - that of helping the child learn to control and set standards for himself.

There are several ways we can "make" children behave. One is by using force. Another is by using fear. Still another is by punishment. Unfortunately, these three methods imply that the caregiver is superior and should overpower the child. Rather than leading to a child with inner control, they make the child angry, resentful, fearful and dependent upon force.

There is another way to discipline children. Though it may not appear to get the immediate results we might like, it is safer, more natural and humanistic. It is based on the assumption that children are by nature good, fair, and honest and ultimately capable of responding to that which is good, fair and honest within us. This method is to treat the child with respect. It is treating the child as if he is as important a human being as you are. It is treating him with the same respect with which you wish for him to treat others, you, and himself.

Don't Take It Out On Your Kids is an effort to show how we can parent and teach effectively without using force, fear, and/or punishment, but rather by treating the child with respect. By offering parents and teachers proven ways to reinforce good behavior and minimize misbehavior it is hoped that the vicious cycle of child abuse and neglect will be broken.

HOW CAN WE TREAT OUR CHILDREN WITH RESPECT?

We can treat our children with respect by using discipline techniques that teach them self-control and responsibility .

***Discipline Techniques that Often Backfire:**

- Embarrassing
- Repeating commands
- Humiliating
- Pleading, begging
- Spanking (physical punishment)
- Ordering
- Taking away favored things
- Nagging
- Punishing psychologically
- Labeling
- Engaging in power struggles
- Arguing
- Rewarding misbehavior
- Threatening
- Giving in to undue commands
- Being vague
- Allowing child to manipulate adult
- Fussing
- Saying what you don't mean
- Being inconsistent
- Expecting child to read your mind
- Losing your cool
- Allowing dangerous, destructive, embarrassing behavior to continue
- Making child feel guilty

***Discipline Techniques that Work;**

- Following through with what you say
- Being consistent
- Modeling appropriate behavior
- Being firm yet kind/fair
- Giving a child a choice only when you intend to accept that choice
- Clearly stating expectations before child has engaged in undesirable act
- Rewarding positive behavior and ignoring negative behavior (except when dangerous, destructive, or embarrassing)
- Making the child feel worthwhile, liked and successful
- Providing consequence for misbehavior
- Providing when/then immediately after undesirable act
- is statements; "When you performed have...then you may."
- Providing if/then statements; "If you...then you may."
- Abuse it/lose it
- Redirecting misbehavior
- Removing child from the situation
- Shaping non-existent behaviors

***How to Stop Misbehavior in the Classroom:**

When children break the rules and their misbehavior cannot be ignored, it is important that the teacher have a system that is understood by everyone. This system should handle the misbehavior in the least reinforcing way possible. Ideally a private place should be created in a classroom where a child can be alone, to think and pull himself together. Such as:

YELLOW CARD: Warning. Return when ready.

GREEN CARD: Return when given permission.

BLUE CARD: Write about behavior and develop a plan to improve it.

RED CARD: Remove from room.

***What to do in the Grocery Store to Help a Child Behave:**

- Give child a responsibility (Match coupons with the labels)
- Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it is dangerous, destructive or embarrassing to you or a bother to others
- Remove child to a private place to discuss misbehavior
- Praise another child's appropriate behavior
- Play a game with the child (Let's count all the tennis shoes we see on people's feet)
- Discuss rules before entering store
- Bring a nutritious snack for child to eat during the shopping
- Bring a story book for child to look at
- Select a secret word or signal which you can both use to get the immediate attention of the other
- Don't let the child out of your sight
- Reinforce appropriate behavior
- Bring a favorite toy, blanket, etc... to help make him feel secure
- Don't bring children who are tired or hungry to the store
- Role play at home how to act at the grocery store
- Sing songs with him
- Give child something of yours to play with -- keys, pocket book, etc.
- Tell child you will have to leave him at home next time -- then do it
- Stop unacceptable behavior as soon as it occurs
- Don't ever buy the child a treat from the store where he threw a fit
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes to the grocery store (both parent and child)
- As your child is able, let him comparative shop for you
- Discuss pictures on the grocery items
- Take an older child to help you
- Let child know it is a privilege to go shopping with you

We can treat our children with respect by helping them develop their self-esteem and encourage their growth.

***How to Build Your Child's Self-Esteem:**

- Show children that you like them by smiling at them, hugging them and speaking to them in a positive way.
- Read out loud together as a family.
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage responsible behavior.
- Help them to learn responsibility by requiring them to complete tasks.
- Set aside a time each day to spend with each child individually.
- Help children to develop organizational skills by providing space for toys, books, schoolwork, etc.
- Help them to discover their own special gifts by letting them develop an interest in activities such as sports, music, dance, drama, etc.
- Encourage their independence.
- Get to know their teachers.
- Do not embarrass children by yelling at them in public.
- Allow your child to express his feelings.
- Listen to your child and look him in the eyes when he is talking to you.
- Do not set your expectations so high that the chance of failure prevents your child from trying.
- Encourage your child to be proud of his name, his ideas and his work.
- Give your child recognition for the effort he makes, even though it may not come up to your expectations.
- Answer your child's questions openly, honestly and immediately, if possible.
- Take your child with you on trips to run errands and involve him in decision-making.
- Build a file of mementos of things in which your child participated.
- Point out and appreciate unique qualities in your child that make him special.
- Do not compare one child to another.

***Positive Ways to Encourage Children's Growth:**

- Show children you like them.
- Provide a model for intellectual curiosity.
- Reward responsible behavior and tasks you ask them to complete.
- Require your child to complete certain tasks starting at an early age.
- Set aside time each day to give your child your undivided attention.
- Encourage organization at an early age.
- Help your child discover his natural gifts.
- Work with your child's teacher.
- Encourage your child's growing independence and autonomy (ability to become self-reliant).

We can treat our children with respect by letting them solve their own problems.

***Six Step Problem Solving Technique:**

1. State the problem.
2. Brainstorm the alternatives.
3. Select one possible solution.
4. Implement a solution.
5. Reassess the plan.
6. Start over, if unsuccessful.

About the Author

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