



Tips for Parents: Discipline—Lovingly in Charge

Parents encounter problems disciplining their children when they either expect too much or too little from the child. Some parents believe that their child should do everything exactly how and when they want it done. Other parents attempt to get their children to obey on the basis of a friend-friend relationship rather than as a parent-child relationship. Both of these discipline methods are destined to fail because they don't take into account a child's needs.

Authoritarian

Some parents expect their children to blindly obey numerous rules without explanation. This kind of parenting is called “Authoritarian”. Children aren't recognized as individuals with their own important desires, thoughts, and needs.

Friend Rather Than Parent

Other parents mistakenly believe that if they befriend their child, they will receive the child's respect and trust. Emotionally immature parents often use this approach because they believe if they discipline the child, he or she will no longer like or love them. These children begin to believe that rules don't apply to them and get in frequent trouble at school and with the law.

A Child's Needs

Successful parenting takes into consideration each child's individual needs. As children develop, they acquire an identity separate from that of their parents and learn to think and act independently. For parents, part of the job description is to help the child be successful in this process: protecting property and the child and those around it from physical and emotional injury as he or she learns to behave in a mature and responsible manner.

Balance

The key to effective, loving discipline is balance. All children need rules in order to know what is expected of them and how to behave--but they must be rules appropriate to their needs. A second grader may be required to complete the day's homework as soon as they arrive home from school, but an eighth grader who is responsible about getting their homework done should be allowed to choose when to do it. This choice allows them to develop important planning skills that they'll need as adults.

Priorities

Besides designing rules to protect property, a child's safety, or the wellbeing of those around them, most parents also have specific rules related to their morals or values. These rules often have to do with modesty, sexual activity, religion, choice of friends, status, or extracurricular activities. The pre-teen and teen years are often when kids begin to question and/or disobey these rules.

The reason for conflict is often because while a teen may be able to understand that drug use is forbidden because it is unhealthy and dangerous, they may not be able to see any clear cut reason why they have to dress the way a parent dictates. Teenagers often see rules about how they dress, how they worship, who they hang out with, or what they do in their spare time as ways for their parents to control them unnecessarily.

Reduce conflict by deciding which issues you can budge on and which issues are not debatable. Some parents may feel that they could let their teenage daughter dye her hair magenta, but will not budge when it comes to her being sexually active. The important thing to realize is that while you can do your best to share your values with your children, and expect them to follow your rules, you can't make your values their values.

Getting them to Obey

Keeping the above information in mind, here are some tips that will help your children to respect you and understand what is expected of them:

- When possible, give them a choice. Kids are more likely to willingly participate if they have a say in the matter.
- Be consistent. Once you set a rule, stick to it, no matter how a child begs, argues, cries, etc. If you give in, they'll know that they can get what they want next time by repeating the behavior.
- Tell the child the rule, the consequence for breaking it, and let them decide.
- Unless the situation is life-threatening, make sure to let your child experience the consequences of their behavior. If they throw a rock at the neighbor's car, don't pay for the repairs. Require that they earn the money and fix the situation.
- If they don't have a choice, don't offer one. If your son must finish his homework immediately, don't say, "Would you please go finish your homework?" Instead, say in a matter of fact tone, "Finish your homework now."
- Leave anger out of it. If you can't control yourself, it's unreasonable to expect your child to. Always discipline in a calm, loving way.
- Punish the behavior, not the child. Make it clear that you love your child, but the behavior is unacceptable. Demeaning your child or calling names disrespects them and they will learn to disrespect you in return.
- Set a good example. If you're dishonest, your children are likely to be too.
- Set limits that your child can reasonably accomplish. Keep in mind your child's age level and make sure limits are appropriate.
- Avoid lengthy lectures. Make your expectations simple and clear.
- Make changes to the rules as your child matures and behaves responsibly to accommodate their growing independence.
- Let kids have a say. Allow them to participate in setting the rules and consequences, but remember--you have the last word.

For More Information:

HOW TO SET LIMITS Ten tips for enforcing them by Charles E. Schaefer, Ph.D.

<http://familyfun.go.com/parenting/child/skills/feature/dony29sclimits/>

Parenting: Discipline and Limit Setting. What to expect from your child according to age.
http://health.discovery.com/centers/kids/childrearingtips/discipline_11.html

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