

Discipline That Works

Avoid confrontations by sensing when your child is under too much stress or approaching the frustration level.

If you sense a squabble is about to turn into a brawl, step in and guide the children in working through their problem (but wait until the last minute in order to give them a chance at working out their own problems).

If you elect to use punishment, dispense it as soon as possible after the misbehavior. No waiting until “your father comes home.”

Help young children, in particular, interpret the impact of their actions on others. Since they are basically self-centered, young children rarely deal with the full implications of their behavior.

Remove temptations from a child’s environment.

Let children know what is expected of them and why.

Be prepared for unusual situations where discipline might be a problem—such as a trip to the doctor’s office or a plane flight. Carry entertaining items with you.

Keep an eye on what is happening. Don’t leave children entirely on their own for long periods of time.

Distract young children from the problem that you see brewing.

Occasionally ignore a mistake or remark that “just slipped out”. Never ignore the child.

Give children the option for a “time-out”. If a child is visibly upset, tell the child you are happy to discuss it or the child can think about the problem in private and then rejoin the group whenever she or he chooses. However, hostility, tantrums, disruptions or disrespect will not be accepted. Don’t let a child do something self-destructive. Step in and offer some coping suggestions.

Provide a cool-down period right before bed. Limit stimulation and activity.

Don’t expect children to immediately stop when an adult is tired of a rowdy game and says, “That’s enough.”

Involve the whole family in understanding and setting rules. Ask for discipline suggestions from children. Enforce the rules once they are set.

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