



Winning Discipline: A Labor of Love!

It's Monday morning, and you're removing your screaming, kicking three-year-old from the toy store until she can regain her composure (and it might take more than a few minutes). The problem? She's holding out for a new pony to add to her collection, and you explained patiently why today was not the day for such a purchase. After school, you found out your son went to a friend's house without permission. He had to help with some extra chores around the house to make up for the time you spent tracking him down. And besides, you had to explain (again) about staying safe and how you as a parent worry when you don't know where he is.

The word discipline means guidance or teaching. In both of these scenarios, children are being taught about limits. They're being taught what is acceptable behavior and what can't be tolerated. And in both cases, parents can feel good about how they handled the situation, even though it was difficult. Positive discipline actually helps children feel secure and builds their self-esteem. There are many techniques and strategies, but here are some of the most effective.

Adapt the Environment

Environments can be changed, often quite easily. If your exploring toddler gravitates over and over toward the planter with the dirt that is so inviting, put it out of sight, just for a while or keep an eye on it and say no before it gets spilled all over the floor. When preschoolers fight over the crayons, try providing another set if you can. If not, explain the principles of sharing once again and separate the kids if they can't stop the feuding themselves. Often, they need help from adults before they can cool down.

Discover the Miracle of Redirection

Redirecting attention from one thing or one activity to another is very effective with infants and toddlers. A key chain is just as interesting as your expensive necklace. Climbing on pillows and over boxes may be even more fun than climbing the stairs.

Weigh the Consequences

One of the most important lessons of life is that consequences follow behavior. As a parent, you can ignore some stuff and let the consequence take over. For example, if a toy gets left out over and over, and the dog thought it was his

toy, that can be tough to take, but it is a logical consequence. When a child's safety is at stake, the consequence cannot be allowed to happen. Children must sit on chairs, not stand on them. A toddler must be stopped in a hurry if she is about to stick a finger in an electrical socket.

Practice Patience and Understanding

You may find it necessary to give yourself a time-out once in a while because tempers can boil. It may help to take a deep breath and remember how it felt to be a child and really want something you couldn't have or feel it was unfair to do a chore you didn't want to do. Patience and understanding go a long way in building trust and respect between children and parents.

Choose Your Issues

It's wise to choose a few issues to focus on and let others go--otherwise, days may be spent in constant turmoil. Kids outgrow many behaviors without too much fuss, and some behaviors are not all that important in the long run. Parents must decide how to address the issues that really matter to the family's well-being.



PERSONAL PARENTING

Family Photo Puzzles

Puzzles are great problem-solving activities. They build eye-hand coordination and small muscle skills. You can make these hands-on photo puzzles for family fun and memories. Create a variety of mini puzzles from small photographs, or enlarge selected photos to 8x10 for larger puzzles. First, laminate the pictures with clear contact paper for durability. Cut the laminated photos into puzzle pieces—just a few for a simple puzzle, 20-plus pieces for more of a challenge. And don't forget to take pictures of your pets. It's fun to put Fido back together again!



Apple-Oat Crisp

This is a great dessert. It's easy, and children can help!

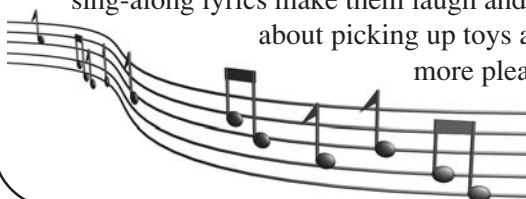
- 5 medium tart apples, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup quick cooking oats
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1/3 cup water
- whipped cream

Place sliced apples in a buttered 8-inch square baking dish. In a bowl, combine the sugars, flour, and oats; stir in melted butter. Spread the mixture over the apples. Pour water evenly over top. Bake in a 375° oven for 30 minutes, until apples are tender and top is lightly browned. Serve with whipped cream.



Music for the Fun of It

Kids react to music in all kinds of ways. Soothing music helps lull them to sleep. Songs that involve clapping and sing-along lyrics make them laugh and dance for joy. And you've probably noticed that singing certain songs about picking up toys actually helps them pick up toys! Routine times go faster and are much more pleasant when they're put to music. Most kids learn the ABC song when they first learn the alphabet, and singing "The Hokey-Pokey" helps them learn body parts. The bottom line is, music enriches life. Make sure there's plenty of music from all cultures in your child's life just for the joy of it.



School Newsletter

When you create your own little newsletter, suddenly reading and writing take on a whole new meaning. Ask your school-age children along with one or two others to keep up with the latest news at school. For the simplest newsletter, fold several sheets of paper in half and staple them together on the folded edge. Children might report on the latest field trip or how the bake sale went. Maybe there's a special event that's coming up, like a carnival or car wash. Extend this activity to include younger children by encouraging them to draw pictures and dictate their day at preschool to you. Either way, this activity in journalism will keep kids busy, and you will learn a lot about what goes on at school!



Safety First

Keeping kids healthy and safe is one of the main roles of parents. This list of Web sites keeps parents aware of health and safety issues from A to Z.

Safe Kids Campaign:

This site is dedicated to the prevention of childhood injuries.

www.safekids.org

Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention:

Part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this site contains updated health information on all topics.

www.cdc.gov

KidsHealth: Check out this site for thousands of up-to-date articles, games and resources for families. www.kidshealth.org

Baby Steps to Building Friendships!

Some children make friends with everyone they meet, from the new child at school to the nice neighbor across the street. Other kids are a bit more reticent and warm up more slowly. Some kids prefer having one really good friend, while another may thrive going from one playdate to another. One thing we do know is that making friends is an important social skill, and it appears to have far-reaching implications. Research shows a link between early peer relations and later adjustment in adolescence and adulthood.



Some key qualities for fostering successful relationships are cooperation, emotional understanding, and good conversational skills. The good news is that parents can help children with these social skills. When parents engage with their baby through coos, smiles, and laughter, the infant is getting an early lesson in social interaction. The lesson in friendship continues as children watch and model parents. And, of course, they have many opportunities to practice their skills with siblings, family friends, and hopefully a range of social groups.

Cooperation

Cooperation is not the first thing on the agenda of young children. In fact, it's not an easy task for them because until they're about three years old, it's difficult for them to see things from another's point of view. They want the tricycle; they just don't understand that their friend wants it, too. You can start modeling cooperation, sharing, and taking turns to toddlers--just don't expect immediate results. Role-play with them: "Would you like a bite of my sandwich?" Once children get it, they'll cooperate more and more, until they can play games and team sports without too much assistance from adults.

✓ What You Can Do

Be the hangout house. Be the house with a great collection of board games and fun things to do outside. Let kids run and be loud once in a while. Play hide-and-seek, do a simple craft, conduct a science experiment, or bake cookies together. Outside of your own home, provide lots of opportunities for social interaction. Toddlers can be in a playgroup, preschoolers can attend story hour at the library, and school-agers can join a club or play group games or team sports.

Good Conversation Skills

Children with poor communication skills, argumentative attitudes, or aggressive tendencies are often rejected by their peers.

✓ What You Can Do

Observe your child playing with friends. Are there some areas she struggles with? Some kids are told, "You can't play with us," when they try to join a group. You can help by teaching your child some basic strategies. The simple question, "Can I play?" is much more effective when it's more specific. "Can I help you find bugs to put in your bug house?" Conversational skills are built with practice. It doesn't help to "make" children play together, but as a parent you can be creative in introducing different types of play that might engage them or create more roles.

Emotional Understanding

Some children are good at reading how others feel. They see a sad face or tears, and they respond with empathy; they get shoved or hit by an aggressive child, and move out of the way! Other children need more practice with interpreting the subtleties of facial expressions, body language, and plain old words. Never accept aggressive behavior, but when you can, let children solve conflicts on their own.

✓ What You Can Do

Help your child put her feelings into words: "I don't like it when you knock over my building." Help your child interpret emotional cues from other kids. "Caleb isn't finished with his snack yet. Maybe he'll want to swing with you when he's done."

Children are born with unique temperaments and understanding your child will help you be realistic in your expectations. Some children want to stand back and observe before joining a group. Let them know this is okay. Other children jump right in to almost any social situation. But all children need help with the important social skills of sharing, taking turns, and negotiating. Demonstrate through your own friendships your kindness, generosity, and thoughtfulness, and your child will be well on her way to developing life-long friendships.

