

# Positive Discipline Strategies

## Key concepts for positive discipline

(note there are variations on this parenting method)

- No bad kids; only difficult behaviors. Children struggle due to many factors including: not-yet-complete brain development, which leads to faulty judgment and limited self control, emotional factors, temperament, learning challenges etc.
- Adults work to build a respectful, supportive relationship with child that creates a desire for cooperation (vs. punishment-based parenting).
- Focus on prevention (i.e. structure, clear rules, reminders, mutual tracking of issues).

- Parent/adult models self-control i.e. neutral-as-possible stance. Understand emotional overload impedes learning.
- Focus on building skills for self-management vs. punishment.
- Focus on positive reinforcement (i.e. verbal praise and acknowledging effort).
- Address difficult behaviors, but in a constructive and non-reactive way.
- Balancing your *authority* (guidance and limits) with *empathy* (tuning into your child's feelings and experience).

## Ways to practice positive discipline

- Practice both the *attitude* and *skill* of acceptance.
- Work to create *positive tone* with your child. Have some fun together. Balance correction with enjoyment. Also, find things to like and appreciate about your child and notice these things out loud. Especially if you've been in a pattern of struggle with them.
- Model respect for your child by not using physical punishment, yelling, belittling/teasing, shaming or excessive guilt to correct behavior (a dose of natural guilt is okay).

- Try to stay as neutral as possible when correcting your child.
- Help your child work on the core skills that prevent most negative behaviors from happening in the first place. They are: *Understanding Feelings, Communication, Flexibility, Respect* and *Problem Solving*.
- Understand your child's temperament. Main traits include: *Sensitivity, Intensity, Persistence, Adaptability, Impulse Control, Focus* and *Activity Level*. Identify which traits are contributing to your child's difficult behavior.
- Identify which behaviors are coming from temperament and which from intention.

- Use lots of positive reinforcement i.e. catch them doing it right.

## For negative behavior:

- Make your expectations clear. Post and discuss rules for behavior. Have kids be part of making the rules this makes them more invested in following them.
- Redirect your child when possible. Take the focus off 'no' and 'don't' and instead give him or her something else they *can* do.

- Try to understand the purpose of the behavior i.e. what is the child trying to communicate to you. Are they tired, over-stimulated, angry or anxious?
- Help your child learn to express the feelings that are underneath most behaviors. Validate your understanding of their thoughts and feelings.
- Teach your child self-calming techniques (deep breaths, counting backwards, calm down breaks, etc.).
- Use verbal prompts to focus your child on the behavior you don't like. Ask questions...

- Simplify choices if your child is escalating. Keep communication simple and direct i.e. "Your choice is to stop yelling or we're leaving the party."
- Give fair warning for consequences. Surprises fuel reactivity.
- Present consequences in a consistent yet fair manner, without excessive negotiation.
- Use reward charts or systems to increase structure and keep your child focused on specific behaviors. Use strong motivators as currency.

## Preview and Review

### *Chances for learning*

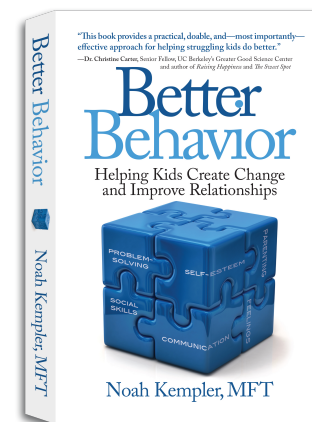
- Learn to anticipate which situations are most difficult for your child to handle. Then **Preview**, or make a plan for good choices before you enter that situation.
- Anticipate frustrations and feelings
- Anticipate high energy
- Anticipate social dilemmas
- Make choices clear
- Plan for check-ins
- Outline natural consequences
- Plan for rewards, if needed

- **Review** situations (after everyone calms down) that don't go well so that your child can learn as much as they can from the incident. **The Review** includes the following questions:

1. Remember when...? Help your child recall the situation.
2. What were you feeling? Validate, or let them know you understand their feelings.
3. What did you do with that feeling? (i.e. hit, scream, run away, etc.).
4. Was that the best way to express that feeling? (Help them self-evaluate).

5. How could you express that feeling in a better way? (e.g. tell the person how you feel, take a break & count to 10, walk away, get help from an adult, etc.).
6. What will you do next time? Have the child plan for the emotional/behavioral choices they will make next time they are in this kind of situation. Can role play.
7. Repair (Have your child apologize, make amends etc., if necessary).
8. Discuss consequences. (Make sure to reduce consequences if your child has put good effort into participating in the Review).
9. Now that the learning has taken place, help your child decide to let the incident go and move on.

## More info available...



Handouts, Reward charts & the BLOG:  
[www.betterbehaviorblog.com](http://www.betterbehaviorblog.com)