

DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS & ALTERNATIVES TO SPANKING

There are no super parents and you will make mistakes in your discipline. There will be times when you lose your temper. Remember to forgive yourself. Don't be afraid to say that you are sorry to your child.

We suggest these alternatives to spanking because children learn more from what their parents do than from what their parents say. So, when a child learns that hitting is acceptable it can lead the child or the parent to engage in other aggressive behaviors. Children can also learn that it is okay for others to hurt them.

Top 10 ways to handle discipline problems:

1. Be firm and be kind.
A child is more likely to hear what you are saying if you are using a neutral tone.
2. Pause.
There's nothing wrong with saying, "I'm too angry to deal with this now. We'll talk about it later."
3. Teach your kids.
Instead of punishing a child for misbehaving, think in terms of teaching how you want him/her to behave. "I don't like it when you leave your skateboard in the kitchen. Next time, please put it in your room. How can I help you remember?"
4. Keep "NO" for when you really mean it.
If you say "NO" too often your child will become confused and ignore your limits.
5. Give explanations, not threats.
By giving your child a brief explanation of why they need to do as they're told, you give them a reason to behave.
6. Follow through and be consistent.
Whether it's a fun activity or a consequence for behavior, always follow through and be consistent. Say what you plan to do and do it. This lets your child know that they need to take what you say seriously.
7. Give incentives.
Inspire your child to cooperate with phrases like, "It's time to go. Why don't you go down the slide one more time and then lets hustle. I want to get home in time to make cookies."

8. Be flexible.
This is a great way for children to learn about negotiation and compromise. "You can play your game longer but then you have to help me empty the trash cans." Do not bribe your child to be good!
9. Drop out of power struggles.
Nothing is as frustrating or less productive as having a showdown with your little one. Invite your child to cooperate by saying, "I've got a problem. I want you to wear a clean shirt and you insist on wearing the same one every day. How can we solve this problem?" Your child is more likely to cooperate if he/she comes up with the solution.
10. Be smart.
Parents will often deal with problems in a set manner, even when their approach is no longer helping. If what you're doing isn't working, find a more effective way to handle the problem. Tip: It's much easier to change your approach than it is to change a child.
11. Listen.
When your child is old enough to express their feelings, listen and acknowledge them. "Thanks for using your words to let me know that you were angry about not getting to play with the toys. I know that you really like that toy and I can understand that you're mad." Encourage them to talk as much as they need to.
12. Taking things away.
If talking, listening and distracting don't work try taking away something that the child enjoys. Be sure to explain to the child why this is being done and for how long. Small children will not remember the reason if this goes on too long.
13. Time out.
Time out is not only about punishment, it's about helping your child manage his or her feelings and giving you both a chance to calm down. A good rule is to make the timeouts the same number of minutes as the child's age. During the time your children don't get attention for behavior you don't like. They stay in a specific place where they are safe.

TIPS

- Don't assign punishment when you're angry.
- Don't use punishment as revenge.
- A more severe punishment is not necessarily a better one.

Adapted from:
Alternative To Spanking, Lisa Gardiner, MA (2002).
&
10 Alternatives To Spanking, Cathryn Tobin, MD (2003).