

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARENTS -

MAKING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRACTICAL FOR FAMILIES



DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES

In this newsletter we will provide you with some ideas for specific teaching tools that you can pull out of your teaching tool kit at the time. There are many different teaching tools, so we have just listed a few here.

To encourage you to take on the role of "parent" instead of being your child's friend, consider the following study. The 2006 National Young Driver Survey gathered data on over 5000 high school students. Those who described their parents as having an authoritative parenting style were 50% less likely to have experienced an automobile crash and 71% less likely to drive while intoxicated compared with those whose parents were less involved.

Ginsburg KR, Durbin R, et al. "Associations Between Parenting Styles and Teen Driving, Safety-Related Behaviors, and Attitudes" *Pediatrics* 2009; 124:1040-1051.

As you choose a discipline technique, please remember the principles of teaching that were given in previous newsletters. Our newsletters are available on our website www.physicianscenter.org at Prescriptions for Parents.

If you appreciate these newsletters, please encourage your friends to sign up by emailing us at md@physicianscenter.org

If this video (in the box to the left) does not automatically open, please click on the "x" in the box or click on "view images".



INFANTS and TODDLERS

By 9 months, most infants are able to begin understanding the concept of "no". Here are some ways to help your child learn that concept.

Determine the rules

Although this is the first thing for you to do – it is also the most difficult. Everything your child does will be new, cute, and exciting, and



PRESCHOOLERS

"Time out" is one way to teach children how to control their behavior. Toddlers as young as 15 to 18 months of age can learn to use "time out" when they have behaved in an unacceptable manner. There are many benefits to using this as a teaching tool. These benefits include:

1. "The punishment fits the crime". Children who have behaved in an "anti-social" way spend "time out" in a quiet place away from other people.



ELEMENTARY

Reward systems have been a longstanding favorite discipline tool of many parents and school teachers, although recently the use of rewards has been discouraged. Some psychologists state that children should derive inner pleasure from their good behavior and not require a tangible reward. To those psychologists, we would ask the question - "Do you enjoy and appreciate your paycheck?" or "would you work just as hard for free?"

Children are no different. They



ADOLESCENTS

If you have not been setting limits with your child, it will be very difficult to start now.

Adolescents are focused on independence - and themselves. Rebellion happens - it is how parents deal with it that is crucially important. Parents must be in control - but not overly controlling.

Remember - teens still need boundaries as their world is filled with potential dangers and risks. Setting boundaries actually helps your teen feel more secure.

you will be tempted to laugh and enjoy the new activity, even if it is something as simple as touching the remote control on the television. However, you will need to think ahead – “Will I think this is enjoyable if she does it repeatedly over the next few weeks?” “Will this activity still be funny and cute, or will it become annoying?” If you decide that the behavior might become annoying, you may decide that this activity will be discouraged by using the word “no”. (You might also decide to change your child’s environment and move the remote control.)

Demeanor should be changed

If you are going to use the word “no”, you must change your facial expression – your demeanor. Infants and young children pay more attention to your face and tone of voice than they do to the words you say. So, if you are laughing at a new activity your little one is doing, but you think you should be discouraging it, turn your face away from your infant. Finish laughing before attempting to say “no”. Then turn back to your child with a serious face and a lowered voice to say “No, don’t touch”. Mothers especially need to lower their voices so that your children will recognize that what you are saying is important.

Displace your infant

Once you have told your infant “no”, move your child away from the activity or object.

Distraction

As you move your child to a different place, distract him with something else that he can play with – a book or toy. You should expect that he will crawl back to the desired, forbidden object. So the next “D” is especially important.

Diligence (because ‘consistency’ did not start with a “D”)

2. “Time out” also allows angry or frustrated parents to separate themselves from their children so no one is physically hurt.

3. “Time out” helps a child learn how to obey her parents. If she knows how to “sit and stay” in time out, she is essentially learning how to obey.

4. “Time out” also provides your child with a quiet place where he can “regroup” - where he can calm himself, get himself under control, and learn to think about his actions.

5. Most importantly, “time out” is one of the best teaching tools to help your child develop her own self-control. By the age of 2 - 2 1/2 years, your child can be told to sit in time out until he is ready to come back and act appropriately. "You can come out of time out when you are ready to play with your sister without hitting her." Then your child has to decide whether she is ready to behave appropriately.

6. After time out, always provide your child with "time in" - a hug, a smile, and reassurance. "I love you. Let's go back and play now without hitting."

See "Time out" at Prescriptions for Parents at www.physicianscenter.org for instructions on teaching your child "time out" as well as other teaching tools.

1. Praise behavior that is acceptable. “I appreciate seeing how you cleaned up your toys.”

2. Offer choices. “Would you like the cheese or the peanut butter sandwich?”

3. Practice appropriate behavior when your child is in a good mood. “Let’s practice how to sit quietly for a few minutes.”

4. Give information. “Instead of whining, use your quiet voice.”

5. Ignore your child. When he whines, remind him to use his quiet voice. Then walk away. If he changes his tone of voice and stops whining, immediately pay attention to him. He will learn that whining will not bring him your attention.

understand that their behavior is appreciated when they are rewarded - and they are then more likely to continue the positive behavior. Behaviors that might be helped by a reward system include: doing chores, completing homework during allotted time, demonstrating kindness to sibling, sharing,

Rewards are very different than bribes! A bribe is an enticement offered to a child to change his behavior on the spur of the moment. It is not planned in advance. A reward, however, is discussed in advance, is planned for, and anticipated by the child when he follows through with the expected behavior.

In order to be effective, reward systems must have the following components:

1. Parents should decide which behavior needs changing. For younger children, it is appropriate to work on just one or two behaviors at a time.

2. The reward the child is working for should obviously be a reward the child wants to earn. Ideas abound - but stickers, hand stamps, hugs, reading book together can be used for younger children. Older children can accumulate stickers on a chart for a more significant reward. (This also teaches the rewards of delayed gratification.)

3. The reward should be given as promised. The reward should be given quickly - as soon as the behavior or activity is completed.

As with any teaching tool, rewards should not be over-used.

Family conferences can be started at this age. Family conferences allow each member of the family to express ideas / concerns and present possible solutions.

Set clear, reasonable rules and boundaries for your teen. Make sure they understand, even if they don't agree. Discuss consequences before rules are broken - and make sure you follow through. Consider allowing your teen to set the consequences - she may be more creative and stricter than you!

Allow your teen to make more decisions. Link increasing privileges with increased responsibility. As your teen demonstrates responsibility (ie taking the garbage out weekly without being reminded), your teen earns more privileges.

Your teen should also be learning new skills that he will need when he is in college or out of your home. Let him cook some meals, do the laundry, sew the button back on his shirt. Consider giving her a monthly allowance with some specific financial obligations (purchasing school supplies or clothes) and help her determine a budget.

Acknowledge to your teen there will be times when you will disagree with each other, but insist that you each talk respectfully. Then listen respectfully to each other.

If your teen is talking disrespectfully to you, leave the room rather than allowing the conversation to continue.

Remember - teens still need boundaries as their world is filled with potential dangers and risks. Setting boundaries actually helps your teen feel more secure.

Helpful hints from an old book by Jay Kesler - Ten Mistakes Parents Make with Teens...

1. Be a consistent role model. Don't say "Do as I say, not as I do".
2. Be willing to admit when you made a mistake.
3. Give honest answers to questions.
4. Allow your teen to develop his or her personal identity.
5. Major on the majors - you may want to ignore the messy room.
6. Give your teen the right to fail and be there as a supportive listener.
7. Be willing to discuss uncomfortable issues.
8. Be willing to spend time with your teen.

Children learn when the rules are consistent. Consistency allows your child to predict consequences of actions, adjust her behavior, and ultimately develop self-control. But being consistent is very difficult for parents! Your child will learn that you mean what you say when you are consistent in your response. Most parents have experienced this situation. The infant is heading toward a forbidden object, reaches out to touch it, but first looks back to the parent to see what might happen. The infant is clearly incorporating the concept of “no”, but while still learning, wants to make sure that the parent’s response will be consistent. So be Diligent / consistent in your responses.

You will find many of these teaching tools useful through adolescence! Teens still need you to determine the rules, maintain a firm demeanor when appropriate, and be consistent.

6. Change your tone of voice. Children pay more attention to your facial expressions and your tone of voice than they pay to your words.

7. Don’t ask a question if you are really telling your child what to do. Don’t say, “Shall we leave the park now?” if you really are saying it is time to leave. Asking a question means the child can answer with “no”.

Jane E. Anderson MD

000-000-0000

md@physicianscenter.org

www.physicianscenter.org