

Teach children right from wrong with good discipline

Discipline is something that concerns everyone who cares for children.

Discipline is more than punishment for misbehavior, according to Growing Child, the monthly child development newsletter. Discipline is also the means through which adults teach children good conduct now and for the future. Every mistake a child makes is an opportunity for learning.

Children need to know right from wrong and how to stand up for their rights, needs, and convictions without interfering with the rights of others. They need to learn inner controls rather than rely on someone else to tell them how to behave. Here are ten tips to help adults provide children this kind of discipline.

Teach by example

Teach by example. Try to act in ways you'd be proud to see the child copy, now and when she's grown. For instance, if a child hears you tell a lie to others, she will learn to tell lies even if you punish her for lying to you.

Be fair

Try to be fair in your discipline. Give the child a fair hearing and make the punishment fit the crime. For example, if a child breaks one of her own toys, the loss of the toy is punishment enough. She doesn't need a spanking or to be told she's careless or clumsy. If you point out that this is why you sometimes remind her to be careful, she'll learn the lesson more readily than if you make her feel bad.

Remember the Golden Rule

Next time you reprimand or punish a child, think about how you would feel if you were in her shoes. Would you feel hurt, misunderstood, or angry if someone treated you the way you are treating her?

Discipline with kindness and respect

When a child makes a mistake, let her know you don't like what she did without making her feel she's a bad person for doing it. For example, if she hits her baby brother, explain that you won't allow her to hit him even though you understand how mad she gets

when he takes her toys or interrupts her games. Listen to her side of the story and try to work out a solution together.

Accent the positive

Let your child know you appreciate her doing things that are important to you. For example, thank her for helping you keep the house neat by picking up her toys.

Minimize the negative

Pay more attention to the things your child does well than to her mistakes. Children tend to repeat behaviors that get the most attention. For example, the more you ask a child to stop playing with her food, the more she may do it. Try ignoring it instead. Then, when you notice her eating neatly, compliment her. It won't take long before you see a change.

Explain your expectations

Let the child know what you expect of her. Try to keep your expectations fair, reasonable, and sensible. If she knows what you expect, it will be easier for her to please you and avoid your disapproval. For example, explain that you expect her to be in bed by a certain time every night. Let her know she can lie quietly or read, but she must be in bed.

Be consistent

Decide what's important, then try to be consistent in your responses. Don't let her do



something one day because you are feeling good and then yell at her the next time because she's getting on your nerves.

Cultivate patience

No matter how much you love your child, sometimes she willasperate you. Try to keep your

patience and sense of humor.

Think, don't react

Try to think rather than react. When you do react in a harsh or unfair way, let the child know. It's good for her to see that you make mistakes too.

BACK HOME



By Michelle S. Rodgers

Berks Extension
Home Economist

Fear-Friend or Foe

Shocked, incredulous, saddened, and frightened would be just a few of the feelings experienced by many at the recent tragedy of the space shuttle. On April 13, 1981, I stood within sight of Cape Canaveral and watched the first launch of a space shuttle, the "Columbia," take off from launch pad 39A. It was truly amazing, fascinating and memorable. Even without being there, last week's events will be equally memorable...indeed a tragedy.

In addition to the loss, there has been some discussion of the resulting trauma, especially to children. Some of the children interviewed were able to express their feelings and one was fear.

Fear is like stress. It can be a friend or foe. Fear can be helpful to us. It makes us cautious and acts to protect us from real danger. Very early in our life we learn to avoid situations or objects that bring harm. Fear becomes a foe when it gets in the way of leading an ordinary life or prevents our becoming involved in new things or situations.

"Children's Fears" by Dr. Women points out three basic kinds of fears: inborn, age-related, and fears produced by traumatic experience or a particular situation in which a child is very frightened. Last week's event was traumatic for many children who had been looking forward to this shuttle launch with great anticipation.

As a parent, you too are dealing with your own emotions in this experience. You can be a positive example for your children. Openly sharing your feelings and communicating them will set the scene for your children to do so as well.

Being honest about the situation and keeping communication open is helpful in dealing with traumatic

fears. If your child can approach the situation with confidence he will learn to overcome other similar situations.

As you deal with any type of fear, there are two important reminders. Avoid punishing your child for being afraid. After this tragedy, a common fear for children is the loss of their own parents. In this case, punishing your child will not help. Instead it may illicit another fear—the fear of being rejected by his parents.

Secondly, avoid overprotecting the child. A statement such as, "It's nothing to be afraid of...nothing like that would ever happen to me!" is not honest or a fair promise to make. This type of overprotection gives the child the feeling that he is not capable of taking care of himself. It does not encourage the child to deal with the reality of life and its events.

The most important thing that parents can do when dealing with fear, and particularly these recent events, is to be sensitive to their child's feelings and fears. Listen to your child and try to discover what he is most concerned about. Talk together. It may take more than one discussion and the subject may come up again to an unusual moment.

There are also several good children's books about fear. "What Makes Me Feel This Way?" by Edna Le Shan, and "Sometimes I'm Afraid," by Watson and Hirschberg are just a sample of those that address the feeling of fear. Reading this type of book together may be a way to open communication between you and your child.

The loss of the space shuttle has been traumatic for me and all of America. Yet it can also be an event that we can turn into a growth experience for each one of us.

Stop whining, temper tantrums by ignoring them

Preschool children are constantly testing the limits of their world—the behavioral limits as well as the physical ones. This testing is natural and normal, but it can become a problem unless parents recognize it and know how to handle it, according to Growing Child, the monthly child development newsletter.

Four problem behaviors often seen in preschoolers are whining, temper tantrums, sulking, and clinging. Parents can most effectively deal with these by ignoring negative behaviors and rewarding positive ones.

Whining

Some children seem to whine all the time. Nothing ever pleases them. They will whine for an ice cream cone, but when the parent produces it, the child will whine that flavor is not right. When the parent produces the right flavor, the child will whine that it is melting and sticky. No matter what the parent does, it does not please the child.

Whining is a negative behavior. If parents consistently reward it by trying to always please the child, they will produce a chronic whiner. If they consistently ignore the whining, it will soon stop.

Temper tantrums

What do you do about a child who screams, rolls on the floor, kicks, and bites? Temper tantrums are certainly negative behaviors.

The general advice is to ignore them, too. If you get involved in the tantrum or try to stop it, you are rewarding the behavior with attention. Of course, it is difficult to ignore a noisy, violent tantrum. At

first, it may embarrass you and drive you up a wall. But be patient. If you succeed in ignoring tantrums, you are not rewarding them, and they should quickly stop.

Sulking

A sulky child withdraws from any challenging situation. He will not try. Parents need to ignore the withdrawal, and at the same time insist that the child try his best, even if it means, "putting him

through" or "forcing him through" certain tasks.

Clinging

The clinging child is too dependent on his parents. He cannot do anything by himself. Again, the advice is to ignore the dependent behavior. At the same time, encourage the child to do things on his own and reward independent actions with praise and attention.

More answers needed for nutrition

YORK — Nutrition and health go hand in hand, with good eating habits directly influencing the well-being of most of our population. Despite the wealth of information nutrition scientists have gathered about food and nutrition needs, very little focuses on the fastest-growing group of people in the United States—the elderly.

Experts predict the over-65 group will make up 20 percent of our population by the year 2030. Among the elderly, the number of people over 75 is growing faster than any other age group. Yet most studies on nutrient needs are carried out on young adults.

"If we wish to give advice about food choices to the healthy elderly," says J. Lynne Brown, assistant professor of food science and extension nutritionist at Penn State, "then we need to know the amounts of the various nutrients they need."

Brown says a decrease in lean body mass and physical activity

often accompany aging. If older adults want to maintain recommended body weight, they often must decrease their calorie intake. "This means the elderly often need a "nutrient dense" diet," explains Brown, "because at the same time they need to take in fewer calories, they also may need to take in more nutrients to meet their bodies' changing requirements."

Recent scientific evidence indicates the elderly may need more protein, calcium and vitamin D, as well as less thiamine and folate, than young adults. They also may be more susceptible to certain nutritional deficiencies. Even with clarification on these special needs, nutrition requirements will be affected by activity levels.

"A 70-year-old who skis cross-country will have a different food requirement from one who is nursing-home bound," says Brown. "Clearly nutrition scientists will need to investigate the specific nutrient needs of the various groups of older adults."

Another area of concern is how nutrition influences the aging process. Does what we eat, or how much, affect aging? Studies with adult rodents have shown that restricting the food intake in a high-quality diet may lengthen the animals' lives. Similar studies with humans could lead to advice on how to avoid age-related diseases and deterioration.

"Until we have more specific information about nutrient needs of the elderly," says Brown, "the best advice for people over 65 remains the same—eat a variety of foods in moderation."

