

Present a Unified Parental Front When Disciplining your Child

Disciplining your child is never easy. You probably know from experience and mistakes how important it is to be consistent, firm and to always follow through with designated disciplinary consequences. But when there are two parents involved, it's crucial they are both on the same page and apply discipline consistently regardless of marital status.

Parents should agree on how to discipline their children. To become reliable to children, both parents must be consistent in dealing with similar situations. In a situation where the parents are separated or divorced, disagreeing with each other over upbringing can create a confusing situation for children. They should make a concerted effort to keep their child's best interests at heart and sit down with their child and line out the rules and expectations and the consequences for violating those rules. Both should agree that the intended discipline is fair, and apply it consistently in a firm yet fair manner in each home.

In addition, if there are disagreements regarding discipline or other parenting issues, they are best resolved when the child is not present. If the child senses discord, they may attempt to manipulate the situation to their advantage.

When teaching good behavior, parents should "practice what they preach." Children learn values and beliefs more by examples adults set than by verbal instructions. Screaming at a child to be quiet or paddling a child for hitting is hypocritical and ineffective. Decide what is important and what parental response to use to teach your child. It would be more effective to calmly tell your child to be quiet or use "time-out" when a child is physically aggressive.

And remember what works now may not work later down the road. Situations may dictate a different approach, and time and maturity may demand a child's rule be modified or abolished altogether. Sometimes your common sense will help you decide when bedtime rules should be modified or table manners relaxed. Some rules will be the same, others will be modified or abolished, and new ones will be introduced. But regardless of the situation, parents should always present a unified front and work together and not against each other in providing effective discipline for their child.