

Follow Through Is the Key to Successful Discipline

Let's face it. There are just some days when it would just seem easier to let your child have his way than feeling like you're fighting a losing battle when trying to discipline them. They beg, plead, cry, barter and scream - anything to get out of doing the time for their crime. However, don't lose your strength and your will during this time. It's times like these when consistent disciplinary action is imperative to teaching your child positive and acceptable behaviors. There is no room for negotiation when it comes to bad behaviors and there should be no room for exceptions when it comes time for punishing misdeeds or bad behavior.

Hopefully before any misdeeds occur, you've sat down with your child and discussed the consequences of misdeeds and inappropriate behavior or decisions. Be concise and consistent when discussing these consequences so that when the time to implement them comes, you can follow through with ease. Children are classically testing the boundaries and limits set on them on a continual basis, and the temptation to 'bend the rules' just once or twice can be overwhelming when they're really trying your patience. But be firm yet fair. Emphasize that this was the understood consequence for this particular misdeed or inappropriate action, and that now is not the time to negotiate. Afterwards, take time out to discuss the situation with your child, and if it seems that perhaps a consequence that worked at first isn't working anymore, rethink that punishment and negotiate with your child. Of course, parameters that are set for their well-being or safety should never be negotiated. But in other instances, it may be time to develop a new consequence based on your child's age, temperament or maturity level.

It's also imperative that your spouse and any other adult caregivers are all on the same page and following through on punishments with the same level of consistency and clarity. Should you determine that what was once working isn't working anymore and develop a new parameter, be sure all adult caregivers are brought into the loop so that follow through remains consistent and clear.