

About Positive Discipline:

Every parent is guilty of “losing their cool” when it comes to parenting their child. Discipline strategies such as bribing or yelling at our children don’t feel good, and they often don’t work. These strategies might work in the moment, but they don’t teach the lessons we want our kids to learn in the long run.

Positive discipline is an approach developed on the premise of being kind, firm, and respectful toward your child. Pulling on the “positive” when disciplining your child will help you have mutual respect for each other and develop a stronger relationship over time. The purpose of this approach is to teach our children to use appropriate behavior to get their underlying need met rather than punish them for inappropriate behavior. When we take time to get curious about what our child hoped would happen with the behavior they chose, we can help them learn how to make wise behavioral choices.



Parent/Caregiver Tips:

- Before jumping to punishment or consequences, try to respond playfully and offer the child a chance for a behavioral redo. Saying things like, *“Wow, that doesn’t sound like you. Wanna try that again?”* can give children the chance to modify their behavior and move forward quickly. This works especially well with kids (and adults) who can be impulsive.
- When setting up consequences for your child, use natural consequences rather than unrelated consequences. For example, if your child throws a toy, they may temporarily lose access to that toy. This is more meaningful in the moment than taking away a reward (e.g. dessert) because of throwing.
- Giving choices is a great way to encourage cooperation. Instead of making an authoritarian demand such as, *“You have to get dressed right now!”* you could give your child some aspect of control by offering a choice: *“Are you going to put your shirt on or your shorts on first?”*
- Consistency is key when it comes to managing behavior. This means consistent responses from one person as well as consistent responses across all caregivers. If you are dealing with a challenging behavior, talk to the other adults who are involved in your child’s life to see if this behavior is happening with all of them. Come to an agreement with how you will respond so that all caregivers are consistent with each other.
- Help your child build emotional awareness by relating to them in a way that validates their feelings. For example, you could say, *“I would also feel very upset/mad if someone took a toy out of my hands.”*
- Teach your child to help be part of the solution by talking about both your needs and the child’s needs, brainstorming ideas, and mutually agreeing on which idea will yield the best results for everyone.

Next Steps:

Disciplining your child will be harder some days than others. However, if you find you are continuously struggling to manage your child's behavior in a positive way it may be time to speak with your pediatrician or with a local counselor for more ideas and recommendations.



Additional Resources:

Positive Discipline: Creating Respectful Relationships in Homes and Schools: <https://www.positivediscipline.com/about-positive-discipline>

Positive Parenting: <https://www.positiveparenting.com/>