Positive Discipline of Older Children

Disciplining Older Children

The purpose of discipline is to teach children about the rules and values of our society and to help them become self-disciplined so that they are happy, responsible adults.

Peel Children's Aid believes that positive discipline techniques should be used rather than spanking or other forms of physical discipline that can result in physical, emotional and developmental harm.

Even verbal scolding can emotionally harm a child. Comments such as "you're no good," for example, can harm a child's sense of self worth.

Building Relationships

Before you can work on discipline issues with your child, you have to build a relationship of love and trust.

Infancy is the best time to build a relationship with your baby, but it's never too late to start.

Build the parent-child relationship by using loving, gentle touches, spending time together, respecting your child's feelings, keeping your promises, apologizing when necessary and having fun together.

Older children need gentle touches even though they often seem embarrassed by it. Just alter your show of affection. Rather than a hug in public just pat your older child on the shoulder.

Developing a Routine

Children of all ages benefit from the security that a daily routine offers.

Keep mealtimes, bedtime activities and weekly activities similar to create consistency in the child's life.

Tips to Keep in Mind

Problem solving and making choices help prepare children for their teenage years.

Choices help children learn how to make decisions. Offer simple choices. For example, "You can make your bed now or after you're finished your breakfast. You decide."

Teach Problem Solving

Help your child identify the problem. Ask questions, such as "what would happen if you tried to…?".

Together, think of some solutions.

Choose the best one.

Try it.

Afterwards, talk about what worked and what you could try next time.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE OF OLDER CHILDREN

Solve Problems Together

As children approach teen years, they still need clear limits but parents should be willing to negotiate a little.

When children start thinking about themselves, their talking back may anger you. However, to keep communicating, parents must do more listening and more explaining with older children.

Talk to the parents of your child's friends about reasonable limits on clothing and curfews.

Work with your children to solve problems together.

Describing the Behaviour

Older children, in most cases, can now verbalize their feelings more comprehensively.

Rather than using a "time-out" approach, parents can have a small conversation with their older children about their behaviour. In doing so, parents should try to describe the behaviour and not the child.

Hurtful comments don't help a child learn from his or her mistakes. Children will learn better if we stick to the facts such as:

What the child did wrong
The behaviour you'd expect or prefer
How you feel

For example, "You didn't let me know where you were and I was worried. You must call home before going to a friend's after school."

From Choices to Negotiation

As children get older they can be more involved in decisions. Negotiating is a useful problem-solving skill that your child will use throughout his or her adult life.

A simple way to negotiate is to let the child chose when he or she will do something (if possible).
Choices should be:
Within the child's capability
Within limits you find acceptable
Compatible with health and safety
Real—if you can't accept one of the child's options, don't offer him that choice.

What Works

Remember, to guide your child's behaviour you Praise good behaviour
Describe the behaviour you want
Let natural consequences teach your child (where safe)
Use logical sequences
Give time-out
Delay a privilege until responsibilities are met
Offer a choice
Negotiate an agreement

Resources for Parents

Being a parent is the most important job you will do. Some parents like to meet other parents, learn new skills, keep up to date on the latest parenting advice and some need assistance.

To find out more about the resources available to you, contact your local health unit or ask your doctor about groups and resources in your area. Or call the Parents Help Line at 1-888-603-9100 or Peel Children's Aid.

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