

Positive Discipline

Southwest Head Start

What is positive discipline?

- Positive discipline guides children to act in acceptable ways.
- Positive discipline seeks to understand the meaning behind children's behavior.
- Positive discipline is only effective through a trusting relationship in a safe environment.
- Positive discipline reinforces desired behaviors.
- Positive discipline is a non-aggressive approach that teaches rather than punishes.

How do I use positive discipline?

Develop a trusting relationship with your child

Be a protective, honest, trustworthy parent who is predictable and safe. Mean what you say. This type of relationship tends to increase positive behavior in children and prevents problems.

For example: Honor your promise and take your child to the park when you said you would.

Be playful and loving

When playing with your children, join their play, look at them and share the joy of the game. Hug them and teach them songs to increase your bond with them.

For example: Play games such as peek-a-boo with your child and hug them regularly

Know what is expected of your children at their developmental stage

Know typical developmental stages. (See Handout on Social and Emotional Development)

For example: Expecting a 2 year old child to sit quietly is unrealistic and unfair to the child.

Model appropriate behavior.

Children learn by what they hear and see. Don't say or do what you don't want your children to repeat.

For example: When you become angry, you can take deep breaths to calm down. This will model what your children can do when they are angry.

Show children alternatives to their behavior.

Instead of telling your children what "not" to do, tell them what they should do instead.

For example: If your child is running inside, you can say, "We use our walking feet inside" or If your child hits someone, you can say, "Be gentle."

Communicate with your child in positive ways.

Listening is an important part of communication. Show that you recognize, accept and understand your children's feelings. It also helps put their feelings into words. Having an unpleasant emotion is normal. Adults need to teach children how to handle emotions in a positive way.

For example: If your child says, "You're the meanest mother in the world!" you can say "you seem angry with me" or encourage your child's

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efforts by saying, "You put your toy away. That was helpful."

Give choices to your child

Whenever possible, give your children choices (such as clothes to wear). This gives children a sense of control and responsibility. When they feel this, they are less likely to engage in power struggles.

For example: If your child is protesting taking a bath. You can say, "You may either take a bath with your rubber duck or with your water-proof book."

Be consistent with rules and consequences

This gives children a sense of security and safety. Establish a few simple family rules that are age appropriate. Enforce reasonable consequences and follow through each time you set a limit. This lets your children know what to expect.

For example: Remember that you may not play with the dog when you choose to pull his tail.

Provide structure so your children know what to expect

When children know what to expect it gives them a sense of security and consistency.

For example: Provide a daily routine with morning and evening rituals such as nap times, bath times and meal times.

Questions for parents

- Am I consistent in responding to my child's behavior?
- Am I honest and follow through on my word?
- Do I acknowledge and praise my child's positive behavior?
- Are the expectations for my child's behavior realistic for his/her age?
- Do I set a good example? What type of environment am I providing?
- Do I allow my child to have choices when possible?
- Do I encourage my child to express his feelings?
- Do I spend too much time punishing my child?

"Why is it so tough??"

NEED: Child may have unmet needs such as: sleep, food, one-on-one positive attention, physical activity, etc.

SKILL: Child may lack a skill needed to be successful such as problem solving, social skills, communication skills, etc. For example, a child may not know how to play with others, so he/she may hit a child trying to engage him/her.

ENVIRONMENT: There may be a conflict between the child and the environment in things such as schedule, learning style, personality, energy level, engaging activities that match child's interests. For example, children will have difficulty staying inside all day.