

THE PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM

MANAGING BEHAVIOR

One of the most difficult tasks for most parents is plainly and simply getting their children to behave in the way they want. It is easy for parents to become highly frustrated with their children when they don't know how to do this. Parents are often very unsure of how to discipline their children. Today they are often not even sure if they should discipline them. They may know that what they are doing is not getting them the results they want, and yet they don't know what else to do. When parents are feeling frustrated and upset, they may be willing to do almost anything to get their children to behave and stop the arguing and yelling. However when things settle down they often discover that some new approach they tried either is too difficult to keep up on a daily basis, makes them out to be some kind of mean monster, or still doesn't work. Parents need effective methods of discipline to use that are practical, useable, realistic and that work without making monsters out of parents. Most parents have the desire to do their jobs, to teach and train their children and have a close, loving and nurturing relationship with their children, but find that they lack either in knowledge or skills.

Some of the most effective methods of discipline use "time out", and "natural and logical consequences", to teach children to manage their own behavior. Children who can manage their own behavior have developed an internal sense of control. With an internal sense of control, they know the guidelines and rules for their behavior and the consequences for their behavior. They are most often able and willing to choose behavior that is acceptable. This lightens the load on parents since they don't have to constantly be telling, reminding or forcing their children to behave appropriately. If the children do not behave, both the children and the parents already know that there

is a consequence involved. Using these techniques relieves much frustration for parents and children.

Parents do not need to argue, yell, or nag, however they do need to be aware, consistent and fair, and have both the desire and means to take action. We will go into detail about how to use time out and natural and logical consequences and why they work so well in teaching children to manage their own behavior.

First we will go over some of the techniques that aren't very effective and talk about how they differ from behavior management techniques.

Behavior management techniques are a balance, somewhere between parents controlling and forcing their children to behave, and giving up in frustration and allowing the children to do as they please. **Behavior management** techniques teach children how to manage their own behavior. **Behavior management** addresses both positive and negative behavior, not just one or the other. Children learn that there are consequences for their behavior, both positive and negative.

With **behavior control** techniques, only the negative aspects of behavior are emphasized and positive behavior is not reinforced through encouragement. **Behavior control** techniques are used after the behavior problem has occurred and are not as effective in teaching the child to consistently behave appropriately. **Behavior control** uses punishment to control or enforce behavior and is often not effective unless someone is there to enforce the punishment.

Behavior management however uses discipline and consequences to teach the child to control their own behavior, and even be able to do so when not being watched.

Punishment and discipline are often confused and thought to mean the same thing, however, they have different meanings and different goals. Punishment is designed to inflict a penalty on someone and get them not to repeat the behavior. On the other hand, discipline is designed to teach self-control. Presented this way, it is rather

clear that children do need to learn self-control and therefore parents do need to discipline their children.

Punishment usually occurs in two ways. Either something negative may be added, or something positive may be removed.

For example, spanking a child for not picking up her toys would be adding a negative, and not allowing the child to watch television would be taking away something positive. Both parts of punishment usually work together where the parent will both spank and then take away. All of which breeds resentment and anger in the child. The child may learn to do, or not do what they are supposed to, but "if" they obey, it will only be because of their fear of the parent, or fear of further consequences.

One of the drawbacks to punishment is that the child often only complies when someone is there to enforce the punishment. Punishment does not help the child to develop an internal method of controlling their behavior. Punishment also often leads to resentment. The resentful child has a very difficult time complying with the parent's requests and often looks for ways to get even with the parents for punishing him. Increasing the severity of the punishment at best only brings temporary compliance. It usually only leads to more resentment and more getting even.

Many parents use fear as a means of punishing. In today's society, many children simply are not afraid of their parent's threats. If the parents don't back their threats up, they have no more leverage with the child. Sometimes the threats are too harsh or difficult for the parent to enforce. If the child is actually afraid of the threats, they may obey, but they usually end up being psychologically harmed because of being threatened by the parents who are supposed to protect and take care of them. In any case, neither result from the use of fear tactics provides a desirable result.

Punishment usually only deals with a specific incident or misbehavior and focuses on the negative aspects of behavior. It also does not impress upon the child what the appropriate behavior should

have been. Discipline on the other hand focuses on both positive and negative behaviors. It works to redirect a child's behavior away from the negative and towards the positive and desired behaviors. Both parent and child get to have a change of pace and hear something positive about the child's behavior.

By focusing on the positive, the child and parent both begin to recognize how and when the child is behaving appropriately and more cooperation is instilled. There are several other advantages to using behavior management techniques. The results last longer and children develop internal control over their behaviors. Children learn to praise themselves for their positive behaviors and this reinforces the positive behavior and increases self-esteem. Arguing, frustration, and tension are reduced allowing the parent and child to work together cooperatively and enjoy their relationship more.

Using behavior management techniques does require the parent's active participation. Active participation requires that parents become aware of the child's behavior. They need to pay attention to both the child's positive and negative behaviors and then have the desire, knowledge and skills to do something about it. When parents notice their child behaving in an appropriate way they need to reinforce that behavior by thanking the child, praising them, and giving them positive attention. Children usually want to please their parents and hearing their praise encourages them to continue appropriate behavior.

Parents need to emphasize the natural or logical consequences of the behavior. For example, the natural consequence for a child who refuses to eat lunch is that they will be hungry. Positive behavior leads to positive attention and praise. For inappropriate behavior with young children, the consequence may be "time out". Since punishment is not used, there is less occasion for resentment to build between parent and child. The child begins to associate that the negative consequences are related to their behavior and their choice

to behave in that way. In the next study guide, more attention will be given to setting natural and logical consequences.

Parents need to be sure that the child knows what appropriate behavior is, or how to correct their inappropriate behavior. It is amazing how often parents assume the child is aware of, or knows what the parents want them to know or do, when in reality, the child is not aware at all. Situations change the ways rules are applied and children often have difficulty determining the correct behavior. Sometimes children are not aware that they have choices in their behavior. Children need to be encouraged to think about their behavior so that they will recognize the choices that could have been available to them. Even if the child knew the choices and intentionally behaved inappropriately, the appropriate behavior needs to be stressed.

When correcting a child's behavior, it is very important to focus on the behavior, not on the child. Do not attack the personal worth of the child. Remember to recognize that although the child's behavior may be bad, the child is not bad. They also do not have bad hands, bad fingers, or a bad mouth; instead, they may need to change what they do with their hands, fingers, or mouth. Attacking the child damages their self-esteem. Children should never be treated with disrespect, called names, or told they are stupid, bad, lazy, etc.

Children need consistency. When parents are inconsistent, children begin to doubt if parents mean what they say. If parents really do mean what they say, they need to express it with action. They need to respond appropriately to both their children's positive and negative behaviors. Children and adults also learn through repetition. Consistency provides this repetition and allows the parent the opportunity to practice the behavior management techniques they are learning. The child has the opportunity to practice behaving appropriately or changing their inappropriate behavior.

By following-up their words and intentions through with action, parents also teach their children to follow through on things. When parents demonstrate that they care enough about their children to

become actively involved in teaching them how to manage their behavior, they are modeling responsible behavior to their children. Children who observe their parents taking responsibility and following through learn to do the same.

USING TIME OUT

Using time out can be a highly effective way to deal with young children's disruptive behavior. When the young child misbehaves, he or she is required to take "time out" from the activity to get control of their behavior and to prevent them from disrupting the situation and others.

The child is removed from the activity and required to sit on a chair for a specific period of time. Several things to consider in using time out effectively are; the length of time in the chair, the location of the chair, consistency, completing the consequence, and the goal of the child's misbehavior.

This may sound like a lot to consider, but when broken down it is rather simple and easy to set up. For young children the length of time in the chair should be quite short - two to five minutes or so. One rule of thumb is to give the child 1 minute for each year of age they are. Young children have a very short attention span which means they can pay attention and focus on one thing for only a very short period of time. Longer periods of time are very difficult to enforce and are not effective since the child cannot focus for very long and soon loses all mental connection to "why" he's in "time-out". The parent needs to keep track of the time and tell the child when they can get out of the chair and join the activities again. If the child gets out of the chair too early they must be reminded and placed back in the chair to complete their time. If the child repeatedly gets out of the chair too early, the parent needs to inform the child that time must start over again and won't be up until the child successfully stays in the chair until given permission to get up.

The chair needs to be located where parents can monitor the child and yet the child cannot become interested in watching things going on around him or her. If the child becomes interested in watching the

activities or television, or is otherwise distracted, he or she is not thinking about their behavior.

Consistency is very important. If parents are going to use this or any other technique, they need to do so consistently. This establishes a pattern for dealing with misbehavior for both parent and child. This pattern helps to change the child's behavior through repetition.

Once the child has completed their time out, the child has received the consequence for their misbehavior and the incident is over. Other conditions, lectures or nagging should not be added. Whenever possible, the child needs to be able to return to the previous activity once they have received the consequence. This reinforces the idea that they get another opportunity to demonstrate that they can behave appropriately after time out.

If parents can determine the child's goal for the misbehavior, they also have an idea of how else to help the child meet her needs and then re-direct the child's behavior. For example, if the child is seeking undue attention, they can be given attention at times when they are behaving appropriately. Using time out can be very effective if used consistently and without undue emotion. Parents need to withhold yelling, lecturing and nagging, and simply enforce the time out. At the same time, they need to reinforce the positive behaviors of their child by praising them and complimenting them when they are cooperating and behaving appropriately. The logical consequence for a child being disruptive during an activity is to lose the privilege of participating in the activity. Once they gain control over themselves they may be ready to participate in the activity again. This also gives them the opportunity to correct what they did wrong and then practice appropriate behavior.

Using time out with younger children introduces them to the concept of consequences for behavior. It sets the standard and prepares the way for easy transition to teaching them to use natural and logical consequences to manage their behavior as they mature.

**STUDY QUESTIONS - STUDY GUIDE ELEVEN
MANAGING BEHAVIOR**

1. One of the most difficult tasks for most parents is getting:
 - a) their children to school on time
 - b) their children to eat
 - c) their children to behave in the way they want
 - d) a break from their children

2. Some of the most effective methods of getting children to behave use "time out" and _____.
 - a) spankings
 - b) punishment
 - c) lectures
 - d) natural and logical consequences

3. Children who can manage their own behavior have developed:
 - a) an internal sense of control
 - b) in their cognitive abilities
 - c) responsibility
 - d) their own punishments

4. Using "time out" and consequences _____ for parents and children.
 - a) doesn't work well
 - b) relieves much frustration
 - c) takes no time
 - d) promotes a lot of stress

5. Behavior management techniques teach children:
 - a) to be afraid of their parents
 - b) that their parents are usually right
 - c) how to manage their own behavior
 - d) to consistently ask their parents how to behave

6. In _____, only the negative aspects of behavior are emphasized and positive behavior is not reinforced through encouragement.
 - a) behavior management
 - b) behavior control
 - c) consequences
 - d) punishment

7. Behavior control techniques are used after the behavior problem has occurred and are not _____.
 - a) effective in teaching the child to consistently behave appropriately
 - b) effective at all
 - c) taken seriously by the child
 - d) as effective as using punishments

17. Which is not an advantage of using behavior management techniques?
- a) the results last longer
 - b) children develop internal control over their behavior
 - c) parents then don't have to be actively involved in their children's behavior
 - d) arguing, frustrations and tensions between parent and child are reduced
18. Using behavior management techniques requires:
- a) parents to do very little
 - b) active participation from parents
 - c) that children be agreeable with their parents
 - d) that parents use very strict and harsh punishments
19. When parents notice their child behaving in an appropriate way they:
- a) should ignore the behavior
 - b) don't need to do anything
 - c) need to remind the child about times when they misbehave
 - d) need to reinforce that behavior.
20. Parents need to be sure that the child knows what the _____ is, or how to correct their inappropriate behavior.
- a) punishment
 - b) appropriate behavior
 - c) discipline
 - d) reinforcement
21. Even if the child knew the choices and intentionally behaved inappropriately, _____.
- a) they should be spanked
 - b) there should not be a consequence
 - c) they should be given a lecture on good behavior
 - d) the appropriate behavior needs to be stressed
22. When correcting a child's behavior, it is very important to focus on:
- a) what the misbehavior was
 - b) the child rather than the behavior
 - c) the behavior rather than the child
 - d) none of the above
23. Children _____ be treated with disrespect, called names or told they are stupid, bad or lazy.
- a) usually learn from others how to
 - b) occasionally deserve
 - c) should never
 - d) none of the above
24. If parents do mean what they say, they need to express it with:
- a) action
 - b) results

