

Positive discipline

How to discipline whilst promoting self-esteem

Be clear about what behaviour you want

Rather than saying 'Don't run in the street', say 'Please keep by my side when we are in the street'. Saying what you want gives the child a clear idea on how to behave and is thus more likely to succeed.

Use choices & consequences

Give the child a choice about a consequence. Say, "Either you help tidy up now, or we won't go to the park today."

Be consistent

Stick to the consequences and, when the child knows you won't give in, the problems will reduce.

Show that you recognize and accept the reason the child is doing what, in your judgment, is the wrong thing

"You want to play with the toy but..."

This validates the legitimacy of the child's desires and illustrates that you are an understanding person.

State the "but"

"You want to play with the toy, but Tom is using it right now."

This lets the child know that others have needs, too. It teaches perspective taking, and may lead the child to develop the ability to put himself in other people's shoes. It will also gain you the child's respect, for it shows you are fair.

Demonstrate the correct way to do something

After firmly stating what is not to be done, you can demonstrate how to do it.

This sets firm limits, yet helps the child feel that you & them are a team, not enemies.

Avoid accusation

Even with babies, communicate in respectful tones and words. This prevents a lowering of the child's self-image and promotes their tendency to co-operate.

If children have enough language, help them express their feelings

Help them think about alternatives and solutions to problems. "You feel angry because I won't let you have sweets. I will let you choose a cracker or a pear. Which do you want?"

This encourages characteristics we want to see emerge in children, such as awareness of feelings and reasonable assertiveness, and gives children tools for solving problems without unpleasant scenes.

Do's

- Use clear, simple directions in a firm, friendly voice to ensure children are not overwhelmed & refuse to comply as a result.
- Do treat those around you with respect, children will learn and imitate the behaviour they see around them.
- Allow the child to feel valued & encouraged.
- Praise the child for good behaviour & offer rewards such as, "Because Tom tidied his toys he can have an extra story before bed."
- Stay calm!

Don'ts

- Don't criticize, discourage, create obstacles & barriers, blame, shame, use sarcastic or cruel humor, or physical punishment when disciplining a child.
- Avoid repeatedly saying things such as "Stop that!" "Don't do it that way!" or "You never..." as this can be harmful to children's self-esteem.
- Don't react or acknowledge misbehavior, such as tantrums & whining, when you can help it!

Remember...

Remember that the job of a toddler, and to some extent the job of all young children, is to taste, touch, smell, squeeze, tote, poke, pour, sort, explore, and test. They do not share well; they need time to experience ownership before they are expected to share. They need to assert themselves ("No," "I can't," "I won't," and "Do it myself"). They need to separate to a degree from their parents. One way they do this is to say no and not to do what is asked; another is to do what is not wanted.

If adults understand children in this age range, they will create circumstances and develop attitudes that permit and promote development.