

what is positive discipline?

Discipline means to teach or to develop by instruction. Discipline is often confused with punishment. Punishment does not teach, but rather focuses on negative behavior and responds to it with a negative result. Positive discipline has the goal of changing or preventing negative behavior. Positive discipline encourages development of life skills so children can grow to be socially and emotionally sound individuals, get along with others, and feel good about themselves.

Positive discipline strategies not only include interventions to be used with children when they misbehave, but also techniques to create a respectful, fair, consistent program.

Resources

Parenting with Positive Behavior Support: A Practical Guide to Resolving Your Child's Difficult Behavior. Meme Hieneman. Brookes Publishing, 2006.

Positive Discipline A-Z, From Toddlers to Teens: 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems. Jane Nelsen. Prima Publishing, 2007.

Parenting Guide to Positive Discipline. Paula Spencer, Ballantine Books, 2001.

Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health 410.730.8267
www.mdcoalition.org Offers support for Maryland families who have children with mental health or behavioral needs.

The Maryland Early Childhood Mental Health Project (ECMH) 410.767.6546
www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/ Offers support for child care providers and families of children birth to age five who have developmental or behavioral needs.

The Positive Discipline Network 800.456.7770
www.positivediscipline.com Offers information on positive discipline including free articles, downloads, workshops, podcasts, one on one coaching, and other resources.



Friends of the Family, Inc.



608 Water Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202-4079
Phone: 410-752-7588
www.mdchildcare.org



MARYLAND
COMMITTEE
FOR
CHILDREN

The Network is a project of Maryland's business community, Maryland Committee for Children, Inc., and the Maryland State Department of Education.



This publication was produced as a work for hire for the benefit of, and with funds from, the Maryland State Department of Education.

Illustration © 2004 Bonnie Matthews
© 2009 Friends of the Family/Maryland Committee for Children



Using positive discipline

A guide for child
care providers

Learning proper behavior takes practice. Children are taught to tie their shoes, to read, to ride a bike; and they also need to be taught how to behave. Children learn by watching the behavior of their parents, teachers and peers, as well as by testing their own behaviors. Each behavioral episode is a chance to teach a child what is expected in that particular situation.

each experience is
an opportunity to
**teach
behavior**



key elements

The key element when using positive discipline techniques is to show respect in all cases. Children watch adults' behavior more than they listen to their words. Therefore, children who are shown respect will learn to give it in return.

Caregivers should consider using three guidelines in their child care programs:

- respect yourself,
- respect others,
- respect your surroundings.

Positive discipline helps children to develop:

- self-discipline,
- responsibility,
- cooperation, and
- problem solving skills.

why do children behave in an inappropriate way?

It is important to understand why a child is behaving inappropriately. The origin of the behavior, if identified, can help the caregiver to teach the child a more appropriate behavior. In some cases, just meeting the child's basic needs, such as offering food and/or a chance to rest can change a child's behavior. Sometimes the child's misbehavior is more complex, such as trying to get attention or testing limits, and requires more time and attention from the caregiver.

positive discipline techniques

Between the ages of birth and 5 years, there are many different stages of development. Positive discipline should complement the child's current developmental stage. Child care providers can use various positive discipline approaches to shape their programs. These include techniques to modify inappropriate behaviors and offer children rewards in an effective, positive way.



approaches for child care programs

Set children up for success. Develop routines, schedules and planned activities with a back-up so children are involved in constructive activities and interacting positively.

Establish simple, clear, consistent rules. Simplicity and consistency are key elements to preschool children learning appropriate behavior.

Offer limited choices. Offering a few choices is a good way to teach decision-making, while allowing children input into their day.

approaches for changing behavior

Ignore negative attention-seeking behaviors. When you address negative attention-seeking behaviors, you are rewarding these behaviors, and they will only continue.

Reinforce positive behavior. Give lots of attention to children who are behaving in ways that are appropriate.

Redirect. Create another activity or event to draw a child's attention away from inappropriate behavior.

Show appropriate ways of seeking attention. Biting and hitting often indicate a need to communicate. Demonstrate appropriate ways to communicate and get attention, like a gentle tap on the arm.

Offer alternatives to undesirable behaviors. Model appropriate behaviors such as negotiating for a toy instead of grabbing it.

Reward children for achieving. When a young child has several triumphs at changing a behavior, take a moment to tell the child that you noticed the change. When a young child makes an effort to do the right thing, recognize the effort with a kind word, a hug, or a sticker.

young children need to know they are special

Find ways to reward children just for being themselves.



It is critical to separate your response to inappropriate behavior from your response to the child. Make sure to clearly tell the child that he or she is liked, but not the behavior, and ask that the behavior be changed.