

How to Discipline a Child

For many parents, disciplining a child comes quite naturally. For the rest of us it takes work... and a lot of it!

Though there really isn't a "cookie cutter" way of disciplining a child, there are certainly some techniques and strategies that prove to be more effective than others.

We've all tried negotiating, yelling, pleading, bargaining, and maybe even an occasional threat in order to get our children to listen. But what happens when each of these ineffective "techniques" fails to elicit compliance? Are there really any other options?

Disciplining a child is a process that takes patience, persistence, practice, and practicality. Each of these qualities goes a long way with regards to parenting and disciplining a challenging child. Parents that possess these traits are much more likely than those that don't to find success at disciplining a child.

Without patience, parents are likely to lash out, yell, or lose their cool with their child. Without persistence, parents are likely to give up and simply let their child do as he or she pleases. Without practice, a parent may never feel completely comfortable disciplining their child. Without practicality, a parent lacks the common-sense necessary to be an effective disciplinarian.

Along with the above traits, parents must also possess the proper tools to be effective disciplinarians. Behavior contracts and behavior charts are two such tools. Behavior contracts help to establish firm limits and clear expectations. Behavior charts also establish clear expectations and allow parents to monitor their child's behavioral progress.

Here are some tips for disciplining a child:

- 1.) Use effective communication. Avoid nagging or shaming. Speak face to face. Be understanding. Be approachable.
- 2.) Use time-outs when appropriate. Typically these should last no more than one minute for each year old that the child is.
- 3.) Use discipline as an opportunity to teach better, more appropriate behaviors.
- 4.) Develop a style of discipline that is authoritative...but not too strict and not too permissive.
- 5.) Ask for support if necessary. Other parents are a surprisingly good source for advice...so are teachers!
- 6.) Remember that disciplining a child involves a lot of trial and error. If something doesn't work after a few tries, then it might be time to try another approach. Be careful not to give up too quickly.
- 7.) Try not to be fooled by your child's manipulations.
- 8.) Be consistent and fair.

Obviously, disciplining a difficult child can be a lot of work. It can become a full-time job for many parents, especially those with challenging children. As with any job, it is important to take a break at times in order to avoid "burnout!" A night out, a nice uninterrupted bubble bath, or simply some quiet reading time is sometimes all it takes to "recharge" a frazzled parent.

Now that we've looked at the traits, tools, and tips for disciplining a child, it's time to take a look at a few resources for disciplining a child.

ParentCoachPlan.com offers a variety of tips, tools, and resources for parents. You'll find behavior contracts, a discipline program, some great parenting articles, and much more there.