

# Parenting and Positive Discipline

(adapted from the Parenting Kit, 1998)

Discipline means teaching your child.

It is a parent's job, but it also helps the child to have a good life. Your job as a parent is to love your child but also help her learn how to behave and get along in the world. This is why a child needs discipline.

Most people who are parenting experts say not to spank or hit children. Because we have spanked children for a long time in our culture, you might think you need to spank to teach your child. But many families have raised children without spanking that turn into fine adults.

Spanking can harm your child in many ways.

- **Spanking may start a bad pattern.** The more your child is spanked, the worse she feels. The worse she feels, the worse she behaves, the more she is spanked, and so on.
- **Children who are hit are more likely to hit or hurt other children.** When you spank, you are telling your child that it's okay to hurt other people to make them do what you want (especially smaller, weaker people).
- **Spanking can hurt how your child feels about himself.** Being hit by someone much bigger than you makes you feel helpless and weak.
- **Parents often spank harder than they mean to** – often if they're angry – and can hurt their child very badly.

Parents are only human. They get tired, frustrated and angry. It is hard to parent the way you think is best sometimes. Most parents have lost control sometimes and spanked or treated their child poorly, even if they didn't mean to.

If you slip up one day and treat your child poorly, it's not the end of the world. Children give us chances to get better. Try to use your slip-up as a way for both you and your child to learn.

Start by saying you are sorry. This shows your child a good example of how to behave. Next, take some time to think about what happened, and plan what you can do instead next time. Then forgive yourself and move on.

**“Positive” discipline** means using teaching techniques that work. It helps both you and your child keep your dignity. It makes your bond of love and trust stronger. Positive discipline can still make your child upset or angry. Learning doesn't have to hurt, but it's not always easy. When you set a firm limit – like, “No bike helmet, no bike” – or ask for them to act in a responsible way – “I need your help now to clean this up” – your child may not like it, but you will not seem mean or frightening. He won't feel that you are against him, and he will keep his trust in you.

**For more information on parenting and positive discipline, contact your local Northwestern Health Unit office, or phone the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program toll free at 1-800-465-4377**

Remember, discipline is a part of how you are with your child. How you discipline, just like your cuddling and playtimes, should be like how you think people should treat each other. Positive discipline is a great way to teach your child how to have healthy, loving and respectful relationships. Remember that positive discipline treats children with the respect and kindness that all human beings deserve. Your child should not feel ashamed or hurt by your discipline. You can also ask yourself: Is this type of discipline right for my child's age and understanding; does it help my child learn how to be responsible or behave in an appropriate way; does it allow my child to feel good about herself; does it keep our parent-child relationship strong?



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