

## LESSON 8: LOVING AND EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

### Part 1

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Read Proverbs 29:17 and 13:24.

- What do these verses teach us about discipline?
- How important is it that we discipline our children?
- If we love our children should we discipline them?
- Is proper discipline good or bad for a child?
- What are the typical ways that people use to discipline their children?

### Part 2

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#### Tips for Effective Discipline:

1. Ensure that children know we love them even when we discipline them.
  - You should never punish your child when you feel angry. This just teaches a child to hit or shout when angry. If you feel angry then try to calm down first and have your child sit in the corner until you are ready.
  - After disciplining a child, it is important to express your unconditional love for them. You can also speak encouraging words to the child, like, "I believe you can make the right choice in the future," or "I believe you can learn to be kind to your brother." Love is a better motivator than fear. This also helps a child feel secure knowing that they are still loved.
2. Be consistent in your discipline.
  - If we allow children to do something one time and then punish them the next time, then the children will be confused about what they can and can't do. They will be afraid that they will accidentally do something wrong. If we are consistent then children will learn what is right and wrong.
  - Threatening to punish a child for bad behavior but not enforcing the consequence is confusing and not effective.
3. Make sure the child understands what they did wrong.
  - Ask the child if they know what they did wrong. If they don't know, calmly explain.
  - NEVER discipline or spank a child without talking to them about what they did wrong.
4. Explain the expectations of the good behavior you want.

- Sometimes children don't know what is expected. Give children clear boundaries.
  - Make sure the child understands what you want them to do in the future.
5. The type of discipline or punishment should be different depending on the age of the child.
    - Young children (2-10) can often be corrected by a stern look, by spanking or by sitting them in the corner for the length of time that is equal to their age (e.g., 10 minutes for a 10-year-old child).
    - Older children (11-18) respond to having privileges taken away and being required to take responsibility for their behavior and choices.
  6. The severity of discipline should equal the seriousness of the wrong that was done.
    - If the misbehavior is serious, then the discipline should be serious. If the misbehavior is minor then the discipline should be lighter.
    - It isn't appropriate to take away a privilege for one month if a child made a mistake only once. It would be more appropriate to take away the privilege for a day and if the behavior continues, then increase the time.
  7. When possible, use a form of discipline that is directly related to the misbehavior.
    - The goal of this way of disciplining is to help a child to take responsibility to fix their misbehavior.
    - For example, if Sarah likes to help her mother prepare meals, but she yelled at her brother who also wanted to help, Sarah's mother would tell her that she can't help her cook until she is willing to let her brother also help. Or, if Peter hits the table and the water spills, his mother would ask him to help her clean it up.

#### Questions

- Which of these tips have you used already with your children?
- Which of these tips have you never thought about or heard of?
- What things do your children do that make you really mad? What practical things can you do to calm down before you discipline your children?
- What can you do to show your children that you discipline them because you love them?
- What is one new thing you will do when you discipline your children in the future?

## Part 3

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1. Give the child a **helpful task** instead of the unacceptable behavior. Especially for young children, you can change irritating or inappropriate behavior by distracting the child with a positive alternative activity like helping a parent or sibling or doing something you know they like to do. It is still appropriate to let the child know that you don't like their behavior.
2. Express **strong disapproval** (without attacking the child's character).

For example, for young children a stern look or clear statement of disapproval of their behavior can be effective because the child wants to be loved and accepted. Focus on the behavior and do not use harsh or negative words about the child. Say something like, “I do not like it when you (describe the behavior).”

3. **Take away privileges.**

For example, you can take a toy from a child for a period of time or not allow them to watch TV for a period of time. Remember, the length of time should match the seriousness of the behavior that needs to be changed and should be appropriate for their age.

4. Show the child how he can **take responsibility for what he did.**

For example, if something is broken or a mess is made (even if it may not be on purpose) the child is asked to fix or clean up the mess. This teaches the child to solve problems that they are responsible for creating. (Example: Adam knocks down his younger brother in the field. His father tells him to help his brother get up, check to see if he is hurt, and tell his brother he is sorry.)

5. **Separate the child from others** – “time out.”

For example, you can put the child in a chair, room or area alone where he can consider what he did and why it was wrong. This allows the child to calm down and gain self-control. Then take a few minutes to talk with the child to make sure he understands what he did, why it was wrong, and other choices he could make in the future. Remember, this should be done only the same number of minutes as the child’s age. For example, a 6-year-old child would have to sit in the corner for 6 minutes.

6. **Give a choice** – acceptable behavior or a consequence/restriction.

The point is to give the child a choice between what is right and the consequence for a wrong choice. It is important that the consequence be specific, realistic, and not harmful, but something that the child would miss or not want to have happen. For example, if your child will not brush his teeth you can give him a choice of brushing his teeth now or not getting to eat sweets for the whole day. This works at all ages.

7. Allow the child to **suffer the natural consequences** of their behavior.

For example, if a child doesn’t take care of his belongings, the common result is they won’t last long, or a child loses a favorite toy because she doesn’t pick it up. Natural consequences can teach children responsibility. This is most effective with older children.

- Which of these have you used?
- Which would you like to try to use in the future?
- Think about some of the times that your child has misbehaved – which of these could you have used?