



Building Blocks

for Parents

Discipline

What:

Discipline is training given to a child to mold or correct his behavior.

When or Why:

Discipline contributes to a child's growth and development by teaching him to handle difficult situations. It is the adult's right and responsibility to provide discipline so that a child may grow and learn to get along comfortably with others. Discipline is used to control negative behavior and to *teach positive alternative* behavior.

How:

When you have decided to discipline:

1. Get the child's attention.
2. Stop the undesirable behavior. If the child runs away or talks back, wait until he returns and/or settles down. Then tell him you understand how he's feeling (upset, disappointed, angry, or whatever), but that he has something he needs to do. If he is defiant and disobeys you, he may need to be told to leave the situation briefly; if he does, see "Time-Out" technique.
3. Help the child find a new way to handle the situation or problem (teach a positive behavior). Example: (1) Teach sharing to children fighting for a toy; (2) Help the child who hits too much to *talk* about his anger instead of hitting.

Example:

How Not to:

Mary and Susie are playing with dolls (having trouble sharing) and Mary hits Susie. Mother yells at Mary to stop hitting. Mother does not move in to see what the situation is that causes Mary to hit. Mary and Susie now argue loudly. Mother yells at both girls, "If you girls can't play together, you'll have to play alone!"

Mary and Susie again hit at each other. Mother comes into the room angrily and slaps both girls. The girls are now crying and Mother is very angry. This is only a temporary solution. The girls have not had a second chance to try to share and the adult has *not* helped them to learn to share.

How to:

Mary and Susie are playing with dolls. Even from the kitchen, Mother can tell that the children are having trouble sharing and will probably soon be fighting. Not waiting for the fight to happen, she steps in to *discipline* the children—to *teach* them something about getting along with each other.

Mom sits down with the girls and finds that they both want to play with the same, favorite doll. Mom helps them to work out that Mary can comb the doll's hair and Susie can dress it. Both girls can now share the doll and enjoy being together without having to resort to negative behavior. If you handle this kind of problem this way *each time* it occurs, you will eventually teach them more positive ways of handling their problems.

— Home and Community Treatment Project
Mendota Mental Health Institute

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GRANT WOOD
AREA EDUCATION AGENCY

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