

## **What is Discipline?**

Today, we often hear parents and teachers talking about the discipline of pupils. But, what exactly is discipline? Discipline is the process of teaching a child the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Good discipline should be a positive force focusing on what a child is allowed to do. The goal of discipline is to help the child change impulsive random behaviour into controlled purposeful behaviour and discipline should be reinforced with teaching, fairness and reminders.

## **What is Normal Behaviour for a child?**

Normal behaviour in children depends on the child's age, personality and physical and emotional development. A child's behaviour may be a problem if it doesn't match the expectations of the family or if it is disruptive. Knowing what to expect from your child at each age will help you to decide what is normal behaviour. For instance, the behaviour of a five year old is quite different and understandably so, than the behaviour of a ten year old.

## **What can I do to change my child's behaviour?**

Children tend to continue a behaviour when it is rewarded and stopped when it is ignored. Consistency in your reaction to a behaviour is important because rewarding and punishing the same behaviour at different times can confuse your child. When your child's behaviour is a problem, you have one of three choices:

- (a) Decide that the behaviour is not a problem because it is appropriate to the child's age and development.
- (b) Attempt to stop the behaviour either by ignoring or punishing it.
- (c) Introduce a new behaviour that you prefer.

## **How do I stop misbehaviour?**

One of the best and most trusted ways to try to stop misbehaviour is to ignore it. Sometimes, misbehaviour is an attention-getting strategy by pupils.

## **Why shouldn't I use Physical Punishment?**

Many parents use physical punishment to stop undesirable behaviour. The biggest drawback to this approach is that while the undesirable behaviour is stopped for a short while, it does not provide the child with an alternative. If the child is not introduced to a good behaviour to replace the bad, then, more than likely the action will be repeated.

Physical punishment can also lead to child abuse.  
Other methods of punishment are preferred and recommended.

## **Using the Time-Out Methods**

Decide ahead, all the behaviours that would result in a time-out e.g. tantrums, aggression, discourtesy etc.

Choose a place – usually an uninteresting place that is neither dangerous nor frightening to the child.

When an undesirable behaviour occurs, the child is told that if the behaviour is not stopped, he/she will be given a time-out. If the behaviour continues after the warning, the parent must remain calm and in control. Send the child to the designated area and let him/her know how much time he/she will spend there. Do not talk to the child while he/she is in the time-out area. If the child leaves before the time has elapsed or if the behaviour continues, then the time is extended.

When the time-out is over, allow the child to leave. Do not discuss the bad behaviour – there is to be no negotiation on this issue. However, you can suggest to the child how he should have acted and what was expected of him/her.

## **How do I encourage new, desired behaviour?**

One way to encourage a new or desired behaviour is by using a reward system. Look at this example:

Your child asks for a watch that costs \$200. You decide that it is a good idea to buy it for him. However, he learns that he has to earn the watch through acceptable forms of behaviour. For every good behaviour, he is rewarded with points and when he has earned 200 points, he will have the watch. Keep a diary – record the good behaviours and the points; record the bad behaviours and deduct the points.

### **Example:**

Acceptable Behaviour - Rewards

Keeping bedroom clean – 10 pts

Picking up after playing – 10 pts

Completing homework – 10 pts

Bad behaviours – Punishment

Fighting – lose 10 pts

Aggression – lose 10pts

Bad language - lose 10pts.

In this way, the child might be encouraged to work towards achieving the points required by demonstrating good behaviours

Please note that the 'prize' does not always have to be costly or material things. Other rewards can include:

- (a) staying up an extra half an hour past the normal bedtime,
- (b) looking at television later on the weekend,
- (c) spending a night at a relative or friend's home
- (d) trip to the beach, zoo etc.
- (e) pizza.

**Making this work:**

Make a list of all the good behaviours and points awarded and a list of all the bad behaviours and points deducted.

<b>Good Behaviour</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
Cleaning Room	5
Picking up after playing	5
Doing chores	5
Doing extra chores	10
No reports of fighting for the week	5
Completing all homework	5
Good reports from school	10
Keeping books clean and tidy	5
Doing well on tests	10
Being polite and courteous	10
Following instructions	10

<b>Undesirable Behaviour</b>	<b>Points deducted</b>
Dirty Room	10
Not picking up after playing	10
Not doing chores	10
Dishonesty	10
Incomplete homework	10
Discourtesy	10
Not following instructions	10

The above can be adjusted to match your own expectations of your child.

What can I do to help my child behave well?

- Accept your child's basic personality, whether it is shy or talkative or very active. Personality can be changed a little, but not very much.
- Make a short list of important rules.
- Avoid power struggles with your child.
- Try not to go to extremes. When you think that you have overreacted, it is better to use your common sense to solve problems.
- Try to avoid situations that can make your child cranky – becoming overly bored, tired or hungry.
- Don't criticize your child in front of others. Never try to embarrass him/her in the presence of others.
- Describe the behaviour of the child as bad – never the child as bad.
- Praise your child often – as long as he deserves it.
- Touch your child affectionately – and often
- Make some activities interesting – going to bed – read a story.
- Give little warnings from time to time – e.g. 'in a few minutes, we will have dinner.'
- If the situation allows it, provide choices for your child and involve him/her in the decision making process. Value his/her contributions.
- At the time of any misbehaviour, do not debate or discuss rules. However, after some time, when everyone is calm discuss the rules and see whether they are still relevant.
- Have family meetings and everyone must have an opportunity to have an input.

## **Permissive Parenting**

Parents generally tend towards giving their children what they ask for – within limits. Knowing what these limits should be is the real trick of parenting these days.

Here is a list of permissive parenting styles that describe the approaches many adults take towards dealing with their children.

See if you find yourself here.

## **General Confused Permissiveness**

This is the most common type of permissive parenting. These are parents who feel out of touch with the contemporary children's world but have a vague feeling that the best

thing they can do is to be a friend to their child. They generally try to give the child whatever he/she asks for.

## **Compensatory Permissiveness**

This is a style often adopted by parents who grew up in poverty or who feel that their own parents were too strict. They want to give their children the material gifts and behavioural freedom they themselves were denied. They want to see themselves and have others see them as allies to their children.

## **Conditional Permissiveness**

This style is when parents give their children what he/she wants on condition that the child satisfies certain parental demands. Freedom and material benefits are often given in return for behaviour that reflects well on the family. These parents tend to see the children as mini-adults.

## **Indifferent Permissiveness**

This describes parents who are too involved with other things to take an active part in their children's life. They tend to give material goods and freedom in return for the child not making too many demands on their time. Such parents are too absorbed in other things to take a real interest in their child.

All of the above attitudes are likely to backfire. One problem is that the child is likely to see his privileges and material gifts as inherent rights rather than benefits contingent on parental approval.

The child is likely to keep raising the bar, asking for more and more until it reaches a point where the requests become totally impossible to satisfy.

It is now the parent has to say 'no' – and the child, never being prepared to accept 'no' as an answer, will react – often negatively.

Parents become scared - frantic and they feel that their authority is at risk. Parents are now forced to regain control – often by limiting the same material gifts that were showered so freely before. The child reacts and the conflict between parent and child worsens.

***Do whatever it takes to be a good parent. Your child deserves the best.***