

Discipline

1. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?

Discipline is a system of teaching based on praise and instruction for the child on how to control his or her behavior. It should take place all of the time. Punishment is only a very small part of discipline; it is negative, or an unpleasant consequence for doing something.

2. When do you start discipline?

Discipline can be started in infancy. Again, this is encouraging good behavior. The AAP recommends starting by establishing a consistent schedule with sleep, eating and play times. Between 6 months and 16 months of age, safety is the biggest discipline issue. It is important to give the child freedom but to do so in a safe environment. Discipline becomes more difficult around 18 months of age when the child will test the limit of his or her power. They learn to use the word "No".

3. How does a parent avoid power struggles (thus avoiding trouble)?

- Offer choices whenever possible (don't give the child the opportunity to say no)
- Make a game of good behavior
- Plan ahead (trips to stores-have snacks, if possible, child should be well rested)
- Praise good behavior
- Pick your "No" battles (limit to important rules involving safety and interacting with others)
- No means no (consistency)
- Give your child some control (how else will they learn independence and thus develop good self-esteem?)

4. What are various discipline strategies?

-**Natural Consequences**-If a child throws and breaks her toy, she won't be able to play with it; if he drops a cookie, he won't be able to eat it.

-**Logical consequences**-To be used if natural consequences aren't appropriate. Example: If your child does not pick up toys, they will be in the way, he or she will not likely care. Here you need to step in to create a consequence; you put away the toys and he/she will not be able to play with them for the day.

-**Withholding privileges**-Don't take things your child truly needs like a meal, choose something your child values that is related to a behavior, and follow through on your promise!

-**Time-out**: last resort (to be used with a clearly defined behavior)

Can use down to 1 year of age. Choose a spot without distractions. Send child to time-out spot immediately if behavior happens despite a warning. Rule of thumb is 1 minute of time for every year of age. If they do not go, pick them up and carry them there. If they do not stay, stand behind them and gently hold their shoulders or restrain the child in your lap. Tell them why they are getting the time out. It will take a couple of weeks to establish. Restart clock if fussing persists. Once time is up, do not lecture or ask for apologies, the child has "served the time"

5. What about spanking?

Spanking is not endorsed by the AAP but they do give recommendations as to how to do it appropriately. Open handed on buttocks, legs or hands, no spanking less than 18 months of age, no shaking. Do not do if you are drunk, out of control, or scared. Give only one swat.