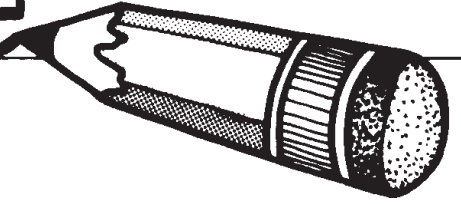
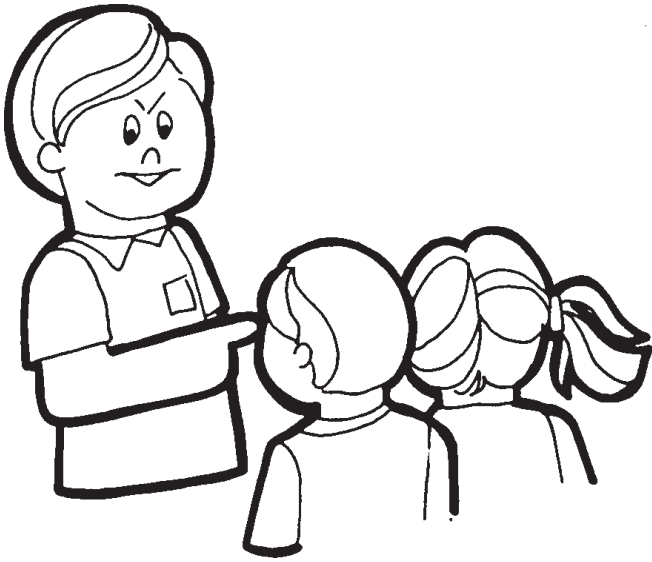


Parenting Pipeline



A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service



Discipline: Guiding Your Child

Despite all your attempts to encourage positive behavior, children will still misbehave at times. Isn't it interesting how much advice you get when your child does misbehave? Everyone has a solution for you and your child — sometimes even strangers! Rarely do parents hear a remark such as, "My, you handled that so well yesterday when Barb was teasing John about his new glasses."

Some level of misbehavior is perfectly normal. Misbehavior is a part of learning. Treat each situation as an opportunity for teaching appropriate behavior rather than for punishing misbehavior.

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An Alternative to Reward and Punishment

One way to discipline children is to reward them when they obey and punish them when they disobey. The big disadvantage to this method — which is the disciplinary system in which most parents of today were raised — is that it denies children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior.

Natural and logical consequences are two other ways to discipline and guide children.

Natural consequences happen naturally. When a child stands in the rain, she gets wet. Natural consequences teach lessons when parents don't interfere.

Logical consequences follow the three Rs:

- Related to the behavior
- Respectful to the child
- Reasonable to both parent and child.

Positive Discipline A-Z
by Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott and H. Stephen Glenn

Logical consequences are obvious. When a child doesn't put his clothes in the hamper, his clothes don't get washed. If a parent lectures or nags about putting clothes in the hamper then still picks them up, the child doesn't learn from his own experience.

Consequences are usually more effective than punishment because the child is able to learn to look ahead to figure out what to do next time instead of the troublesome behavior to avoid the problem.

Plan consequences in advance with the child. With opportunities come rules, with privilege comes responsibility. Your child needs to understand what happens if the rules aren't followed before undertaking the opportunity. For example, if a child wants to take part in the after-school club, homework must still get done. If homework slips, the child loses the privilege. But when homework is caught up again, the privilege can be resumed.

Involve the child in determining logical consequences. "What do you think would be logical to help you remember where to put your bike?" Punishment may not help the child learn to always return the bike to the garage.

Problem Solving and Positive Discipline

Punishment doesn't always solve the problem. Instead try these problem-solving steps.

1. Talk about the child's feelings and needs.
2. Talk about your feelings and needs.
3. Brainstorm for solutions.
4. Write down all ideas without evaluating.
5. Cross out all solutions that you and your child don't like.
6. Decide which one you will follow through on.
7. Write out your mutually agreeable plan.

*How To Talk So Kids Will Listen
and Listen So Kids Will Talk
by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish*

To use positive discipline, provide two positive choices, and accept the child's decision. Use a friendly tone of voice that communicates your goodwill. "Michelle, I'm trying to write out bills. You can either play quietly in here or put stamps on the envelopes for me. You decide which you'd rather do." Follow through with respect and repetition when needed.

It takes time and practice to learn to use consequences, problem solving and positive discipline in place of punishment.



Praise Appropriate Behavior

It is important for children to learn that there can be positive consequences associated with their decision to act appropriately. Be sure to comment on all the positive behavior you see. However, be specific in your praise. For example, rather than saying, "You're really being good today," say, "Great! You're getting your homework done right away."

Let children know how their behavior has a positive effect on you. For example, you could say, "I really appreciate your getting the table set for supper. When we work together, we can get done faster and start eating sooner." You have just described the behavior and the positive consequences. This type of praise can boost your fourth-grader's self-esteem.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with fourth-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.

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