

What is Discipline?

Discipline is “a structure that adults set up for a child to allow them to learn to fit into the real world happily and effectively.”¹ Okay, so what does *Loving Discipline* mean?

The goal of disciplining a child—especially a young one—is the same; to keep them safe while they are growing up and learning about life.

In short, Loving Discipline is setting boundaries, following up with appropriate consequences, and giving praise to help our children grow into healthy adults.

Why do Children Need Loving Discipline?

FIRST It helps them manage anxiety.

SECOND Loving Discipline also teaches children to manage their emotions. Our goal is to teach our kids appropriate emotions and behaviors. We do that by providing loving discipline to their negative behaviors, such as hitting, while guiding them through their big feelings, such as anger.

THIRD Loving Discipline helps children grow into successful adults. Using Loving Discipline as part of your parenting approach will help them have a healthy and fulfilling childhood, while preparing them to be successful adults.

FOURTH Children need loving discipline to be happy. Without loving discipline—and the boundaries it teaches—they will feel disconnected. They won’t know what their limits are, which may cause them to act out often in very inappropriate ways.

Unified Discipline

Before starting a Loving Discipline plan with your child, there are certain things you need to decide:

1. Are both you and your partner united? This means that you will have to cooperate and sometimes compromise. Talk it through, but make sure that you are both on the same page.
2. If you do disagree about how to discipline, don’t disagree in front of your child. Children are amazingly perceptive, and when they see that their parents are inconsistent with how they discipline, they will almost always use that to their advantage. The same is also true for a single parent. Raising children is hard work and demands your consistent attention and follow-through.

Helpful Discipline

Children need structure, and that may mean that we— as parents— need structure too.

1. Part of creating structure for our children is creating a safe environment by taking away temptations or things that could hurt them. This is called prevention.
2. You will need to set age-appropriate boundaries. Your child needs to understand that boundaries or rules have both positive and negative consequences. Explain the positive reasons to follow the rules and the correctional discipline that will occur for breaking them.

On a Practical Note...

Some examples of Positive Discipline are:

- **Distraction**—place a toy in the child’s hand when they are reaching for something that could harm them.
- **Positive Reinforcement**—reward and praise your child when you see them behaving appropriately.
- **Encouragement**—Treat mistakes as opportunities to learn. Instead of corrective discipline, talk to your child gently and lovingly about the behavior you want to see.

Some examples of Correctional Discipline are:

- **Verbal Correction**—Voice tone is one of the most effective ways of getting a child’s attention. This does not mean yelling, but using a firm, corrective tone.
- **Time-Out**—time away from toys, the things they love, or even time-out on a chair will effectively reinforce the behavior you want from them.
- **Removal of privileges**—losing TV or video privileges, or a privilege the child has gained, like playing a game.
- **Logical consequences**—allowing your child to experience the logical results of their actions. Such as purposely breaking a toy results in the toy being thrown away or hitting a friend results in the friend not wanting to play anymore.

Harmful Discipline and Abuse

Some Examples of Harmful Discipline are:

- **Harsh Verbal Discipline**—This would be things like yelling, rage, cussing, and shaming (in other words, attacking character instead of behavior).
- **Striking**—Hitting or kicking a child because you are angry or upset is NEVER okay. It is abusive and is not only wrong, it’s illegal. It can harm your child and land you in jail.

Some examples of abuse are:

- **Emotional or psychological child abuse** is abuse that impairs a child’s emotional development and self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.
- **Physical abuse** is when you physically harm your child. It involves punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, or otherwise harming a child physically.
- **Child neglect** is when you fail to meet your child’s basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, education, or housing.
- **Child sexual abuse** is any sexual activity done to a minor. A child legally cannot consent to ANY form of sexual activity. This involves sexually touching a child’s genitals, vaginal or anal penetration of any kind, intercourse, oral sex, showing pornography, or any other sexual activity. When a person sexually abuses a child, they’re harming the child in a way that leaves wounds that can last a lifetime.

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