

Reality Discipline

Dr. Leman advises parents to use action as well as words in disciplining children. Although spanking may be one appropriate action, allowing the child to live with the consequences of his/her misbehavior is even more effective. The key is to use both words and action. Remember this sequence of reality discipline:

1. The child misbehaves or disobeys the parent.
2. The parent corrects the child and identifies the consequences for further misbehavior (words of warning).
3. The child disregards the warning and misbehaves again.
4. The parent reminds the child of the promised consequences (words) and implements them (action).
5. The child lives with the unpleasant consequences for an appropriate time.

Another feature of reality discipline is waiting for the teachable moment to tell your child what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Teachable moments come when a child is ready to listen or is sincerely contrite over his/her disobedience. Parents often have an innate recognition of the teachable moment.

Many times in disciplining children, parents find that withholding certain privileges is more effective than spanking or sending a child to his/her room. Withholding privileges is effective only when the parent knows (1) which privileges the child values most and (2) how long to withhold the privilege without exasperating the child.

Withholding Discipline Examples

Offense

First-grader refuses to clean room and goes out to play
Sixteen-year old gets a speeding ticket
Eight-year old teases sister continually about dolls
Seventh-grader refuses to limit phone conversations
Ninth-grader Sam neglects mowing and goes to movies

Consequence

No going outside to play for a few days
Forfeits truck keys for two weeks
His toys bagged up & locked away for few days
No phone or email for few days
Reduced allowance and no movies for a time

Effective Discipline

You can teach your kids to be more respectful, responsible and resourceful. Consider these options:

- admit to your children some of your mistakes as a child/teen
- change how you discipline by adding a statement of consequences whenever you correct your children
- following through on your words by allowing your kids to experience the consequences of misbehavior
- think before you speak or discipline

Reality discipline is simply a matter of allowing our children to experience the consequences of their behavior. Too often we rush in and protect our kids from having to experience unpleasant consequences. When we short circuit the process, our kids fail to learn the lesson.