

Discipline and Your Child

It's difficult to raise a child, and sometimes it's very difficult to keep our cool when our children misbehave! Many parents struggle with discipline and wonder if they're being too strict, too loose with the rules or they just don't understand why their child misbehaves.

The basic rule of discipline means to teach a child, not punish. Children want to learn how to be good and naturally want to please their parents. The problem is, toddlers often don't know how to be good and need to be taught proper behavior. In addition, many kids need repetition and often have a hard time remembering the rules. They need to be told things over and over. It's natural and normal.

Parents need to be familiar with child development and what they should and should not expect from their children. Often time trouble arises when mom or dad expects too much from a child who is too young to understand a rule or safety concern. There are many parent groups in your area who are happy to provide resources and materials. You can also go to the Family Ties Network, Inc. website www.familytiesnetwork.org and click on the "library" icon for a list of available parenting materials.

Some basic discipline rules that all parents can follow:

1. Try not to yell or say "no" all the time. If you are always yelling, kids will stop listening. Save "no" for the times when a child could hurt themselves or others.
2. Praise good behavior.
3. Keep your rules simple and consistent! Kids get overwhelmed and confused with too many rules. Remember, children learn by exploring and trying things out. Provide them with a safe home to do this.
4. When your child does something wrong, show them the right way. Don't just say "no" and walk away.
5. Take a break when you're angry at your child. It's okay to get mad. It's not okay to scream at them. Call someone, remove yourself from the scene or whatever else helps you.
6. Teach, don't punish! Before you yell or spank, imagine it happening to you. Mean words hurt for a lifetime.
7. Make routines and stick to them! Set a regular bedtime every night and do not negotiate on this. Children need routine. If they learn to argue their way out of situations, or see you as too flexible, it may open the door to misbehavior.
8. Most importantly, listen to your child and try to understand their feelings. Look for a reason for the bad behavior and try to correct it. Talk to your kids – it's the most important and nurturing thing a parent can do.

Children thrive on attention. Spend as much time with your kids as possible, talk to them and understand where they're coming from. Tell them when they have done something good and how happy that makes you feel.

Kids will misbehave, that's just how things are. As parents we need to keep our cool and lead by example. It's also our job to teach, nurture and help our kids become the best people possible. If you feel overwhelmed, or need more information, that's okay – most every parent has at one time or another reached out for help.

For resources on parenting or referrals to agencies that can help you, call REACH CNY at 315-424-0009.

REACH CNY (formerly the Family Ties Network, Inc.,) works to ensure access and support for the full range of quality, culturally-sensitive health and human services; to reduce teen pregnancies; and promote the health and well-being of individuals and families; through education and advocacy.