



Alternative Approaches

All children need discipline. But when discipline means hitting and yelling, children feel bad about themselves and parents still feel frustrated. Try these ideas instead:

- 1 **Use time-outs.** Use a one to five minute "time-out" to respond to dangerous and harmful behavior such as biting, hitting, and purposeful destruction. Put the child in a safe place, boring place. Explain the inappropriate behaviour and describe the correct behavior. After time-out, acknowledge correct behavior as soon as it is displayed.
- 2 **Focus on cause and effect.** If your child breaks a toy by playing roughly, do not replace it. The child will learn for the next time.
- 3 **Use logical consequences.** Let the consequence make the point. For example, if a child misuses a toy, the child could lose the use of that toy for a period of time. If a child writes on the wall with crayons, the child could help wash the wall. If a child misses a curfew, the child could lose that amount of time from the next outing.
- 4 **Associate actions with activities.** Associate your child's wants to your needs. For example, "When your toys are picked up, we can go to the playground"; "When you come home from school on time, you can have a friend over."
- 5 **Take away corresponding privileges.** Match the removal of the privilege to the action as closely as possible. For example, fighting over a toy results in a loss of play time. Take away the privilege for a short period; if the loss of privilege lasts too long, then resentment builds, the child forgets why he or she lost the privilege in the first place, and the lesson is lost.
- 6 **Give choices you can live with.** "You can set the table, and play outside later; or, DON'T set the table, and DON'T play outside later."
- 7 **Focus on the behaviour.** Tell your child that you are disappointed or angry with his behavior, not with him as a person.
- 8 **Ignore annoying behavior when possible.** Ignore behavior that will not harm your child, such as bad habits, whining, bad language, and tantrums. *Never ignore potentially dangerous behavior.* It is hard to do nothing; however, this lack of attention takes away the very audience your child is seeking. Remember any behavior you ignore tends to decrease, and any behavior you pay attention to tends to increase. Yelling and hitting a child are forms of attention, and a child may increase unwanted behavior to get this attention.
- 9 **Model correct behavior.** Practice what you preach. Patiently show the child the right way to behave or do a chore. Children will follow your example.
- 10 **Redirect behavior.** Substitute a positive behavior for a behavior that is a problem. For example, if a child draws on a wall, have paper available. If a child throws dirt, have a ball available. If a child has trouble taking turns, add another toy or ask the child to help an adult.
- 11 **Post chores.** Post a list of jobs that need to be done, such as washing the car or weeding the garden. Let the child choose a "work detail." This is especially effective for children 8 years of age or older.
- 12 **Develop family rules together.** Work together to write down family rules. Put them where everybody can see them.
- 13 **Rearrange space.** If items are not picked up or are frequently missing, try rearranging space to eliminate these problems. For example, you can hang baskets on low hooks for easier cleanup of clothes and toys. You might assign a special table or counter for schoolbooks and homework so these items will not be misplaced.
- 14 **Use facial expressions and body language** to convey how you feel about your child's behavior. Facial expressions and body language can let your child know how disappointed you are in his or her inappropriate behavior. Older children can be told her or his behavior has made you feel upset, sad, or angry.
- 15 **Say — and see — good things too.** Children need to know what they are doing right, not just what they are doing wrong. Expect to see good behavior, and you are more likely to get it.