

The Role of Discipline  
In the  
Effective Parenting of Children<sup>♦</sup>

By  
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Parent Education Notes 1

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## Contents

Introduction	3
Discipline and punishment - What's in a name?	
Discipline for children is about shaping and changing behaviour	
What disciplining children is about	4
RAISE	
The Five Basics of Discipline (RAISE)	
Disciplining children is partly about teaching rules	4
Different families may have different rules	
Different times and places have different rules	
There may be different rules for different situations	
Disciplining children is partly about encouraging appropriate behaviour	5
Disciplining children is partly about discouraging inappropriate behaviour	6
Disciplining children is partly about providing the right learning environment	7
Disciplining children is partly about providing the right example	7
Guidelines for the effective discipline of children	8
Goals of effective discipline	
Principles of discipline	
Setting limits	
Application of discipline	
Things to avoid in the application of discipline	
Parenting approach: Increasing the effectiveness of discipline	
Methods of Discipline	11
Consequences	
Time-out	
Removal of privileges	
Reasoning or away-from-the-moment discussions	
Spanking	
Timing of discipline to deal with undesirable behaviour	
Developmental approaches to effective discipline	15
Encouragement, support and instruction	
Discipline during infancy	
Discipline and the early toddler (one to two years)	
Discipline and the late toddler (two to three years)	
Discipline for preschoolers and Kindergarten children (three to five years)	
Discipline and school age children (six years to 12 years)	
Discipline in the teenage years	

## INTRODUCTION

### **Discipline and Punishment: What's in a name?**

Discipline and punishment are often spoken of as if they meant the same. This may not matter in everyday conversation but when it comes to raising children, it is important to know the difference and not confuse them.

In an ideal world, it might be possible to do without punishment. However, it would not be possible to do without discipline because discipline is about instruction in the rules, customs and understandings we live by that make society possible. The word discipline means to teach or instruct and is related to the word disciple, someone who follows a system of instruction, trains as an apprentice in a craft or trade, or follows a particular code of conduct.

Many of us get stuck in the principles of a traditional system of "discipline" that links wrongdoing and punishment and can be heard in the saying, "Make the punishment fit the crime." This traditional approach teaches us that discipline is about the necessity of all wrongdoing being addressed by an appropriate punishment. In law and in the workplace this is sometimes referred to as a progressive discipline approach. This approach suggests that the more serious the wrongdoing and the more often it is committed, the greater should be the punishment. This sort of "progressive" discipline approach that emphasizes punishment might be acceptable in the legal system and the work place but do we really want to bring up our children this way? We should not confuse the punishment of criminals and the discipline of employees with the raising of our children.

### **Discipline for children is about shaping and changing behaviour**

If we are careful about our understanding of the word discipline, to discipline means to instruct and train a person in a particular code of conduct. When the word "discipline" is applied to the raising and instruction of children it refers to the system of teaching and nurturing that prepares children to achieve competence, self-control, self-direction, and caring for others.<sup>1</sup>

Discipline is one aspect of the process that prepares us to live in the family, community and society of which we are a part. Discipline for children is about shaping and changing behaviour. It is NOT about punishment.

The Canadian Paediatric Society describes discipline in the following way:

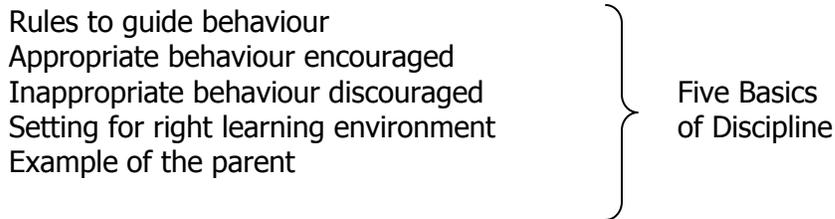
Discipline is the structure that helps the child fit into the real world happily and effectively. It is the foundation for the development of the child's own self-discipline. Effective and positive discipline is about teaching and guiding children, not just forcing them to obey. As with all other interventions aimed at pointing out unacceptable behaviour, the child should always know that the parent loves and supports him or her. Trust between parent and child should be maintained and constantly built upon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Howard BJ. Advising parents on discipline: what works. *Paediatrics*. 1996; 98:809 – 815

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Paediatric Society. Effective discipline for children, Position Paper (PP 2004-1). *Paediatric Child Health* 2004; 9:1:

## WHAT DISCIPLINING CHILDREN IS ABOUT

To **RAISE** our children effectively we need to know the basics of discipline:



## THE FIVE BASICS OF DISCIPLINE (RAISE)

### 1) Rules: Disciplining children is partly about teaching rules

As parents, we consciously or unconsciously introduce our children to a particular set of rules and patterns of behaviour that we believe it is necessary for them to learn in order to live in the family and, later, in the world outside the family. Many rules make up this code of conduct. For example, you will recognize everyday rules such as; "Wash your hands before you come to table," "Don't speak with your mouth full," "Say thank-you when someone gives you something," "Don't run out into the road," "Finish eating before you leave the table." These are some of the familiar rules that might contribute to a code of conduct a parent wishes to teach their child. Taken together, rules like these and many more like them make up the mortar that holds families and communities together and makes society possible.

- Prioritize rules. Give top priority to safety, then to correcting behaviour that harms people and property, and then to behaviour such as whining, temper tantrums, and interruption. Concentrate on two or three rules at a time.

#### Different families may have different rules

Not all families have the same rules. Different families have different codes of conduct. Parents from different families and different cultures have their own ideas about what rules are important for their children to learn.

#### Different times and places have different rules

The way that parents discipline children changes from generation to generation and varies from culture to culture. For example, the punishment of beating a child on the back with a cane, once considered an appropriate way to discipline a child ("Spare the rod and spoil the child"), is now regarded as child abuse. Physical punishment, threatening, intimidating, shaming, belittling and insulting treatment, that have all been used as ways of disciplining children in the past, are increasingly regarded as misguided and harmful.

### Different situations may require different rules

Even when the importance of a rule has been agreed upon, it may change from one circumstance to another. For example, in the company of trustworthy adults, it might make sense, in some situations, to tell your child, "Adults know best." However, in the company of adults who take advantage of children, you would want your child to know, "Not all adults can be trusted."

## **2) Appropriate behaviour: Disciplining children is partly about encouraging appropriate behaviour**

As parents we need to have strategies for the systematic teaching and strengthening of behaviours we regard as appropriate and desirable.

- Effective parenting includes disciplinary procedures to increase desirable behaviours.
- The most critical part of discipline involves helping children to learn behaviours that:
  - Meet parental expectations
  - Effectively promote positive social relationships
  - Help them develop a sense of self-discipline
  - Lead to positive self-regard.

In order to increase desirable behaviours:

- Reinforce desirable behaviour. Praise positive behaviour and "Catch children being good."
- Identify the behaviours that you value and wish to encourage so that your children understand what is valued.
- Request acceptable and appropriate behaviour that is attainable.
- Attend to your child to increase positive behaviour.
- Attend to and show interest in your child's school and other activities. (This is especially important for older children.)

### **3) Inappropriate behaviour: Disciplining children is partly about discouraging inappropriate behaviour**

As parents we need discipline strategies to reduce or eliminate inappropriate behaviour, behaviour we regard as undesirable or ineffective.

Undesirable behaviour includes:

- Behaviour that places the child or others in danger
- Non-compliance with reasonable expectations and demands of the parents or other appropriate adults (e.g., teachers)
- Behaviour that interferes with positive social interactions and self-discipline.

Some of these behaviours require an immediate response because of danger or risk to the child. Other undesirable behaviours require a consistent consequence to prevent generalization of the behaviour to other situations.

- Ignore, remove or withhold parent attention to decrease the frequency of intensity of undesirable behaviour.
- Provide a strong and immediate initial consequence when the problem behaviour first occurs.
- Provide an appropriate consequence consistently each time the problem behaviour occurs.
- Suggest alternative acceptable behaviour to replace the problem behaviour, whenever possible.
- Provide a reason for a consequence for a specific behaviour, which helps children, once they are beyond the toddler stage, to learn the appropriate behaviour, and improves their overall compliance with requests from adults.
- Couple the elimination of undesirable behaviour with a strategy to stimulate more desirable behaviour. This increases the effectiveness of discipline.

#### **4) Setting: Disciplining children is partly about providing the right learning environment**

We need to provide a learning environment that includes supportive parent-child relationships and positive responses to the child's attempts to master vocabulary, locomotion and other skills.

Techniques of discipline are most effective when they:

- Occur in the context of a loving and secure relationship. Parent's responses to children's behaviour, whether approving or disapproving, are likely to have the greatest effect in this context because the parent's approval is important to children in this kind of parent-child relationship.
- The context of a loving, secure parent-child relationship enables the child to feel stable and cared for by a competent adult. This sense of affection and security leads to the development of a sense of personal worth.

To provide a loving, secure parent-child relationship:

- Maintain a positive emotional tone in the home through play, parental warmth and affection for the child.
- Provide consistency in the forms of regular times and patterns for daily activities and interactions to reduce resistance, convey respect for the child, and make negative experiences less stressful.

As children respond to the positive nature of the relationship and consistent discipline, the need for frequent negative interaction decreases, and the quality of the relationship improves for both parent and child. As the parent-child relationship becomes increasingly comfortable, the child's sense of personal worth is further strengthened.

#### **5) Example: Disciplining children is partly about providing the right example**

We also need to model respectful communication, orderly, predictable behaviour, and collaborative strategies to encourage desirable behaviour and resolve conflict.

- Model orderly, predictable behaviour, respectful communication, and collaborative conflict resolution strategies
- The best educators of children are people who are good role models and about whom the children care enough to want to imitate and please

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN**

We discipline our children so that they will behave in ways that we believe will best prepare them for living in the family, succeeding at school, getting along with friends relatives and other adults, and help our children find their way into the adult world. Of course, what we teach them and what they actually do may sometimes be different. But, by and large, there is usually quite a good fit between the way parents teach their children to behave and the way their children really do behave.

How do we manage this? How do parents effectively teach their children to behave in a way that enables them to live successfully, not just within the everyday life of the family, but also within their communities and the larger society?

While there are many ways to parent, there are some quite well established general guidelines that have been agreed upon by those who specialize in uncovering what leads to effective parenting. The American Association of Pediatricians and the Canadian Paediatric Society have both written position papers on effective parenting. These two publications<sup>3</sup> provide the resource material for much of the discussion of effective parenting outlined in these notes.

### **Goals of Effective Discipline**

The goals of effective discipline are to:

- Protect the child from danger
- Help the child develop self-confidence
- Support the child to develop self-discipline
- Help the child to develop a healthy conscience
- Assist the child to develop an internal sense of responsibility and control
- Assist the child to develop appropriate values
- Foster acceptable and appropriate behaviour in the child
- Enable the child to respect the parent's authority and the rights of others.  
(The foundation of effective discipline is respect.)

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<sup>3</sup> Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, American Association of Pediatricians. *Guidance for Effective Discipline*. Pediatrics 998;101:723-728. Canadian Paediatric Society's Position Statement (PP2004-01) *Effective discipline for children*.

The intended outcome of this process of child discipline is to raise emotionally mature and disciplined adults. A disciplined person is able to:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Postpone pleasure</li> <li>○ Be considerate of the needs of others</li> <li>○ Be assertive without being hostile</li> <li>○ Tolerate discomfort when necessary</li> </ul> | } | <p>These are adult qualities that we would <u>not</u> expect a child to master but, rather, to begin to show</p> |
|--|---|--|

## **Principles of Discipline**

There are ways that we can encourage positive, parent-child relationships that ground discipline and enhance the growth and development of our children.

### Setting limits

- All children will sometimes behave in ways unacceptable to their parents. Even in the best parent-child relationships, parents will need to put limits on behaviour that their children will not like.
- Consequently, disagreement and emotional discord will occur in all families. In families with a reinforcing, positive, parent-child relationship, where clear expectations and goals for behaviour have been set, these episodes are less frequent and less disruptive.

### Application of discipline

- Apply discipline with mutual respect in a firm, reasonable and consistent way (Inconsistency will not help a child respect their parents).
- Respond consistently to similar behavioural situations to promote more harmonious parent-child relationships and more positive child outcomes.
- Be flexible, especially with older children and adolescents, through listening and negotiation. This will reduce the number of occasions the child refuses to comply with parental expectations.
- Involve the child in decision-making to increase the chance of the long-term development of moral judgement.

### Things to avoid in the application of discipline

- Harsh discipline such as humiliation (verbal abuse, shouting, name-calling) will make it difficult for a child to respect and trust the parent
- Inconsistency is one of the main obstacles to achieving the goals mentioned above. Inconsistency will confuse any child, regardless of age. (e.g., Telling a child to "Do as I say, but not as I do" is an example of inconsistency and does not represent effective parenting.)

### Parenting approach: Increasing the effectiveness of discipline

- Provide regular positive attention, sometimes called special time (opportunities to communicate positively are important for children of all ages).
- Listen carefully to children and help them learn to use words to express their feelings.
- Provide children with opportunities to make choices whenever appropriate options exist, and then help them learn to evaluate the potential consequences of their choice, and reinforce the emerging desirable behaviours with frequent praise, ignoring trivial misdeeds.
- Avoid nagging and making threats. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Apply rules consistently.
- Ignore unimportant and irrelevant behaviour (e.g., swinging legs while sitting).
- Set reasonable and consistent limits. Consequences need to be realistic (e.g., long groundings may be impractical to supervise).
- Know and accept age-appropriate behaviour. (e.g., a toddler who accidentally spills a glass of water is not showing wilful defiance. A child who refuses to wear a bicycle helmet after repeated warnings is being wilfully defiant.)
- Allow for the child's temperament and individuality. Adjust discipline to the temperament of the child. A strong-willed child needs to be raised differently from the so-called 'compliant child.'
- Ensure clarity on the part of the parent and the child about what the problem behaviour is and what consequence the child can expect when this behaviour occurs.
- Deliver instructions and correction calmly and with empathy.

Following such an approach will result in several potential benefits:

- Desired behaviours are more likely to be learned
- Newly learned behaviour will become a basis for other desirable behaviours
- The emotional environment in the family will be more positive, pleasant, and supportive.

## **METHODS OF DISCIPLINE**

### Consequences

In applying consequences:

- Apply consequences as soon as possible.
- Do not enter into arguments with the child during the correction process.
- Make the consequences brief. (e.g., Time-out should last one minute per year of the children's age, up to a maximum of five minutes.)
- Mean what you say and say it without shouting at the child. Verbal abuse can be as damaging as physical punishment.
- Follow consequences with love and trust, and ensure that the child knows the correction is directed against the behaviour and not the person.
- Guard against humiliating the child.
- Model forgiveness and avoid bringing up past mistakes.

### Time-Out

Time-out is one of the most effective disciplinary techniques available to parents of young children, aged two years through primary school years. Like any other procedure, time-out must be used correctly to be effective. It must be used unemotionally and consistently every time the child misbehaves.

- Time-out, usually involves removing parental attention and praise (ignoring) or requiring the child to remain in a selected place for a specified time with no adult interaction. In preschool children, time-out (removal of positive parental attention) has been shown to increase compliance from 25% – 80%.

Time-Out, to be effective, must:

- Be initiated correctly
- Limit what the child does during the time-out
- Be terminated correctly
- Have appropriate follow-up
- Be used consistently
- Be used for an appropriate duration
- Not be used excessively
- Include strategies for managing avoidance and escape, in place before the time-out is given.

Several aspects of time-out must be considered to ensure effectiveness:

- Time-out is not effective immediately, although it is highly effective as a long-term strategy.
- When first introduced, time-out will usually result in increased negative behaviour because the child will test the new limit with a display of emotional behaviour (sometimes approaching a temper tantrum).
- The child's emotional reaction when time-out is given needs to be regarded as a normal reaction to the new limit, that the parent does not respond to.
- Over time, the emotional reaction will become less frequent and less intense, and the undesirable behaviour will diminish or disappear.
- When time-out is used appropriately, the child's emotional reaction will not persist and their sense of self-esteem will not be damaged, despite the intensity of the reaction.
- If a parent engages in verbal or physical interaction during disruptive behaviour, the emotional reaction, as well as the original problem behaviour, will persist and perhaps worsen.

It is often difficult for a parent to ignore the child's emotional reaction or if the child begins pleading and bargaining for time-out to end. The inability of parents to deal with their own distress during a time-out is one of the most common reasons for its failure. If used properly, time-out will work over time. It may not necessarily eliminate the unwanted behaviour, but it will decrease the frequency.

### Suggestions applying effective time-out:

- Introduce time-out by 24 months.
- Pick the right place. Be sure the time-out place does not have built-in rewards. The television should not be on during time-out.
- Use the guide of 1 min per year of the child's age, to a maximum of 5 minutes, to determine the length of the time-out.
- The parent must be in charge of time keeping for time-out.
- Prepare the child by briefly helping him or her to connect the behaviour with the time-out. A simple phrase, such as "no hitting," is enough.
- Avoid teaching or preaching during time-out. When the child is in time-out, he should be ignored.
- Create a fresh start after the time-out is over, by offering a new activity. Don't discuss the unwanted behaviour. Just move on.
- These general guidelines may need to be adjusted to suit the particular temperament of the child. Parents may have to experiment with the length of time-out, because 1 min per year of age may be too long for some children.

### Removal of privileges

Removing privileges or denying participation in activities (e.g., grounding for one evening with no T.V.), is more usually used with older children and adolescents. To be effective, the privilege removed must be a valued one. This strategy also produces a high rate of compliance.

### Removal of privileges, to be effective:

- Must be used consistently
- Must take place for an appropriate amount of time
- Must not be used excessively

Care must be taken not to remove aspects of the child's life that may be regarded as a "privilege" by the parents but is more accurately a necessary aspect of the child's life.

*Example: Denying a hyperactive child a physical activity, like going out to kick a ball around, is unkind to the child and unnecessarily stressful for the adult who has to supervise the child during and after the removal of the "privilege."*

### Reasoning or away-from-the-moment discussions

Discipline involves teaching positive behaviour as well as changing unwanted behaviour. That is, children need to know what to do as well as what not to do. Clear succinct explanations and, sometimes, discussions can help.

- "Away from the moment" refers to dealing with the difficult behaviour not in the heat of the moment, but rather in advance or away from the actual misbehaviour. An away-from-the-moment discussion can help prevent undesirable behaviour by giving parents the opportunity to teach the child the desirable behaviour in advance. This technique is not appropriate for use in children younger than three years to four years of age.
- In general, it is more effective to anticipate and prevent undesirable behaviour than attempt to eliminate it.

### Timing of discipline

Usually, the closer the disciplinary approach to the undesirable behaviour, the more effective it will be. However, this is not always the case. There are circumstances when disciplinary action should be postponed or applied on an ongoing basis.

- Now  
Some undesirable behaviour must be dealt with immediately because of danger or risk to the child (e.g., Preventing a child from hurting his or her sibling).
- Ongoing  
Other undesirable behaviours require a consistence consequence to prevent generalization of the behaviour to other situations (e.g., Reminding a child that it is important not to push his or her sibling out of the way in order to get to the car first).
- Later  
Some problems, especially those that involve intense emotional exchanges, are best handled by taking a break from the situation and discussing it later when emotions have subsided, and there has been time to decide how to develop alternative ways to handle the situation or avoid them altogether (e.g., There is nothing to be gained by attempting to reason with a child in a tantrum).

## Spanking

The physical punishment of children is unnecessary. The following statements on spanking by two leading paediatric authorities, suggest that spanking and other forms of physical punishment have no place in the effective discipline of children.

The Psychosocial Paediatrics Committee of the Canadian Paediatric Society has carefully reviewed the available research in the controversial area of disciplinary spanking. They conclude:

The research that is available supports the position that spanking and other forms of physical punishment are associated with negative child outcomes. The Canadian Paediatric Society, therefore, recommends that physicians strongly discourage disciplinary spanking and all other forms of physical punishment.

Similarly, the Committee on the Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health of the American Paediatric Association do not support disciplinary spanking:

Because of the negative consequences of spanking and because it has been demonstrated to be no more effective than other approaches for managing undesired behaviour in children, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents be encouraged and assisted in developing methods other than spanking in response to undesired behaviour.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACHES TO EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

### Encouragement, support and instruction

- Some desirable behaviour patterns emerge as a result of normal development (e.g. sleep-wake pattern, eating, crawling and walking) and the caregiver need only notice and encourage them to strengthen and refine them.
- Other desirable behaviour patterns (e.g., sharing, good manners, empathy, study habits, and behaving according to principles rather than seeking immediate rewards as in lying and stealing) must be taught because they are not part of a child's natural repertoire.
- Teach socially desirable behaviour patterns by modeling and shaping these skills, and by paying attention to them and encouraging them when they occur.
- It is easier to stop undesired or ineffective behaviours before they occur than to correct or develop new, effective behaviours. Consequently, it is important for parents to identify positive behaviours and skills that they want for their children and make a concerted effort to teach and strengthen these behaviours and skills.

### Discipline during infancy

Infants need a schedule around feeding, sleeping, play and interaction with others. This schedule helps regulate autonomic functions (like sleeping and waking) and provides a sense of predictability and safety. Infants should not be over-stimulated. They need to be allowed to develop some tolerance to frustration and the ability to self soothe.

- At the earliest stages of development, discipline strategy is passive and occurs as infants and caregivers gradually develop a mutually satisfactory schedule of feeding, sleeping and awakening. Over the first few months, the infant's biological rhythms tend to become more regular and adapt to family routines.
- Discipline of infants should not involve techniques such as time-out, spanking or consequences.
- Signs of discomfort, such as crying and thrashing, are modified as infants acquire memories of how their stress has been relieved and learn new strategies to focus their attention on their emerging needs.
- Parental discipline at this stage consists of providing generally structured daily routines, while at the same time being prepared to recognize and respond with flexibility to the infant's needs.
- As infants begin to move around and initiate increasing contact with the environment, parents must impose limitations and structure to create safe spaces for them to explore and play. Parents also need to protect them from potential hazards (e.g., by installing safety covers on electric outlets and removing dangerous objects).
- Communicating verbally will prepare the infant for later use of reasoning. While they may not fully comprehend what is being said, infants are sensitive to cues from their caregivers. However, parents should not expect that reasoning, verbal commands, or reprimands will be effective in the management of behaviour of infants and toddlers.

### Discipline and the early toddler (one to two years)

It is normal and necessary for toddlers to experiment with control of the physical world and with the capacity to exercise their own will versus that of others. Consequently, parent tolerance is recommended.

- Disciplinary interventions are necessary to ensure the toddler's safety, limit aggression, and prevent destructive behaviour. Removing the child or the object with a firm "No" or a very brief explanation (e.g., "No – hot") and redirecting the child to an alternative activity will usually work. The parent should remain with the child at such times to supervise and ensure that the behaviour does not recur, and also to ensure that the parent is not withdrawing love.

- Early toddlers are very susceptible to fears of abandonment and should not be kept in time-out away from the parent. However, occasionally, a parent may become so frustrated with the child that he or she needs a period of separation from the child.
- Early toddlers are not verbal enough to understand or mature enough to respond to verbal prohibitions. Therefore, verbal directions and explanations are unreliable forms of discipline for early toddlers.

*Example: The toddler wants to play with a breakable glass object on a hard kitchen floor. Remove the child and the object and redirect the toddler's attention to a more appropriate activity such as playing with a ball in another room. The parent should remain with the child.*

### Discipline and the late toddler (two to three years)

The developmental process for mastery, independence and self-assertion continues.

- Sometimes the child's frustration at realizing their own limitations leads to temper outbursts. These outbursts do not necessarily express anger or wilful defiance. The caregiver needs to show empathy, realizing the meaning of these outbursts.
- At the same time, it is important for the caregiver to continue to supervise, set limits and routines, and have realistic expectations of the child's achievement capabilities.
- Knowing the child's pattern of reactions helps prevent situations in which frustrations flare up.
- Redirect the child to some other activity, preferably away from the scene of the temper outburst (N.B., The toddler cannot regulate behaviour based on verbal prohibitions or directions alone).

*Example: The toddler has a temper tantrum in a public place. Remove the child from the place of misbehaviour. Hold the child gently until the toddler gains control. Give a short verbal instruction or reassurance followed by supervision and an example. (E.g., "It's alright now, you don't have to sit somewhere you're not comfy, we can sit on the grass instead.")*

- When the child regains control after a temper outburst, it will help the child if the parent gives some simple verbal explanation and reassurance.

- The older children grow and the more they interact with wider, and more complex physical and social environments, the more the adults who care for them must develop increasingly creative strategies to protect them and teach them orderly and desirable patterns of behaviour.
- Consistent structure and teaching (discipline) will enable children to be able to integrate the attitudes and expectations of their caregivers into their behaviour.
- This transition to increasing responsibility can be more challenging with children who have developmental disabilities and may require additional or more intense strategies to manage their behaviour.

Discipline for preschoolers and kindergarten-age children (three years to five years)

At three years to five years of age, most children are able to accept reality and limitation, act in ways to obtain another's approval, and be self-reliant for their immediate needs.

- However, they have not internalized many rules, are gullible, and their judgment is not always sound. They require good behavioural models on which to pattern their own behaviour. The consistency should apply not only in the rules and actions of the primary caregiver, but also in other adults who care for the child.
- Reliance on verbal rules increases, but still the child requires supervision to carry through directions and for safety.
- Approval and praise are the most powerful motivators for good behaviour (N.B., Lectures do not work and some consider them to be counterproductive).
- Time-out can be used if the child loses control. Redirection or small consequences related to and immediately following the inappropriate behaviour are other alternatives.

*Example: The preschooler draws on the wall with crayons. Use time-out to allow him or her to think about the inappropriate behaviour. Consider also logical consequences, e.g., take the crayons away and encourage the child to clean up the mess to teach accountability (N.B., It is the process of clean up that is important for the child to learn, here, not the outcome).*

### Discipline and School age children (six years to 12 years)

Around the age of beginning school, rules become internalized and are accompanied by an increasing sense of responsibility and self-control. Responsibility for behaviour is transformed gradually from the primary caregivers to the child.

- The child's increasing independence may lead to conflict between parent and child.
- School-age children tend to act autonomously, choose their own activities and friends and, to some extent, recognize other than parental authority.
- Continue to supervise, provide good behavioural models, set rules consistently. However it is also important to allow the child to become increasingly autonomous, when appropriate.
- Parents continue to make the important decisions because school-age children cannot always put reasoning and judgment into practice.
- Use praise and approval liberally, although not excessively, to encourage good behaviour and growth into increasing maturity. The use of appropriate motivators (rewards) should be encouraged (e.g., Buy a keen reader his or her favourite book).
- Acceptable means of discipline include withdrawal or delay of privileges, consequences and time-out.

*Example: The child destroys toys. Instead of replacing these toys, let the child learn the logical consequences. Destroying toys will result in not having that toy to play with.*

### Discipline in the Teenage years

The transfer of responsibility from the primary caregiver to the child is especially noticeable during the transition to adolescence.

- Conflicts can frequently occur because the adolescent increasingly tends to adhere to the peer group, challenges family values and rules, and distances him or herself from parents.
- Parents can meet these challenges by remaining available, setting rules in a non-critical way, not belittling the adolescent, and avoiding lectures or predicting catastrophes.
- Contracting becomes a useful tool.

- Despite their challenging attitudes and assertions of independence, many adolescents do want parental guidance and approval.
- Ensure that the basic rules are followed and that logical consequences are set and kept in a non-confrontational way.

*Example: The teenager has been told clearly that the evening meal is ready. The meal is served, eaten and cleared away before the teenager arrives at table. He or she is told that there is food in the fridge that he or she can prepare. (N.B., Putting food on a plate and keeping it hot is sending a message that will tend to encourage the undesirable behaviour – that is, the message that the caregiver will always adjust to his or her whims, even if it is inconvenient to do so.)*