Discipline Is NOT a Dirty Word

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Revised Edition
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A Workshop Outline for Parents, Teachers, and Caregivers of Young Children
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Introduction for Discussion Leaders

What Is Discipline?

For many people, the word discipline suggests a harsh or unpleasant action inflicted by one person on another. Discipline is often thought to mean punishment. When we look at the origin of the word, however, we discover that it is closely related to the word disciple. A disciple is a follower, or one who learns from a leader. A disciplinarian can be thought of as a teacher or leader, and discipline as the set of attitudes and behaviors that a leader hopes a follower will want to acquire. When we describe a self-disciplined person, we are talking about someone who regulates his or her own behavior. Effective disciplinarians gradually work themselves out of a job as their disciples become more and more able to control their impulses and direct their actions. When we hear the term inner control we know it refers to a person who doesn't need anyone saying “do this” or “do that.” The disciplined person has a well-developed inner ability to decide what appropriate behavior is and to act accordingly. It takes time to develop self-control. Children depend on wise, experienced adults to set limits that will keep them safe until they can regulate their own behavior.

The characteristics of someone who is a good disciplinarian with children seem to be:

- a person children find interesting and full of good ideas.
- a person who is loving and helpful.
- a person who makes developmentally appropriate rules and expectations and helps children understand and abide by them.
- a person who demonstrates appropriate behavior through speech and actions.

Many parents and teachers are all too aware of their own flaws in working with children. It's easy to remember the times we've been too impatient, too critical, or too harsh. As we go through the exercises in this workshop we should try to give ourselves credit for the good times we've had with our children.

Setting the Stage for Workshops

A difficult situation can occur in workshops when a participant describes a specific child-rearing technique and asks, “Is this the right thing to do?” To prepare for this, we suggest that during the first meeting the leader establish a framework or set of criteria that will enable participants to answer the question for themselves, perhaps with discussion and support from other members of the group. This will make it possible for the leader to remain in the facilitator role and to refrain from making judgments or having to be an “expert.”

If a participant describes a practice that is clearly abusive or neglectful the leader must first make it clear that it is unacceptable and against the law and, second, that the leader may be required by law to report the parent’s actions to the appropriate authorities. This can be an uncomfortable and difficult situation, perhaps best dealt with by saying to the parent, “I’d like to discuss this in private with you. Could we spend a few minutes together after the workshop and move our discussion along on other topics right now?”

The following exercise may be helpful in establishing a set of criteria for participants to use in evaluating whether specific descriptive practices fall within the acceptable or recommended range.
The Discipline Continuum

Materials needed:
5- or 6-foot length of clothesline
10 clothespins (if possible, two of the clothespins should be red, four should be yellow, and four should be green)

Introduction (The group leader should put the following ideas into his or her own words.)

Imagine for a minute that we can all place ourselves along a discipline continuum. Pretend that there are ten possible points along this continuum and that we can choose not only the points that seem to represent our usual behaviors with our children but also the points at which we would most like to be. I'd like two volunteers to be "clothes poles" for this demonstration; the only responsibility the clothes poles will have is to keep this clothesline stretched between them. (Ask the two volunteers to join you at the front of the room. Give each of them one end of the clothesline and ask them to stretch it taut between them.) Let's imagine that (volunteer's name) is holding the clothesline at point 1 on the continuum. This point represents a style of parenting in which a parent says, "I believe in perfect freedom for children, so I will set no rules, no limits, no restrictions of any kind for my children. They are free to write all over my neighbors' walls, run into the street, never go to school or a doctor." Point 1 also represents parents who may be chronically so ill, stressed, depressed, or otherwise incapacitated that their attitude seems to be, "I just can't be bothered to keep the kids in line so they have to fend for themselves."

Whichever of these two perspectives is the cause, point 1 represents child neglect; it's illegal, and you cannot choose this approach. The group leader then marks point 1 on the clothesline with a red clothespin, pointing out that the color red indicates a red stoplight. The other end of the clothesline, where (other volunteer's name) is standing, is point 10. This point represents discipline that uses harsh punishment—beatings, shakings, or other actions that result in harm to children. We call point 10 child abuse and it, too, is illegal, so we'll mark it with a second red clothespin as a "stop" for this kind of disciplinary practice.

Now consider points 2 and 3. They represent parenting styles that provide a few limits for children but probably not enough to let children feel that they are protected and that they understand the kinds of behaviors adults expect of them. Points 8 and 9 are also within the legal limits of what parents can do to their children but still represent a lot of punishment and a "do as I say" style that may make children angry and defiant. Let's mark points 2, 3, 8, and 9 with yellow clothespins to indicate "proceed with caution." It's important to note that stress can push us to extreme behavior we would not (in our more sensible moments) believe to be desirable. A parent who begins the day at an 8 or a 3 may discover that such things as a clogged toilet, unexpected bill, and a preschooler's temper tantrum can push her over the limit into "2" or "9" behavior, or even beyond, into abuse or neglect. If we bring the two ends of the line together we can see that parents under stress can slip from "10" to "1" or vice versa.

There are additional good reasons for parents and teachers to train themselves to use discipline strategies that correspond to the points we will mark with green ("Go") clothespins at 4, 5, 6, and 7 on the clothesline continuum. These
reasons are reflected in several studies of children who seem to turn out to be the kinds of high school students most of us consider to be desirable because they are doing well academically and socially and seem to be reasonably happy. These studies describe three styles of parenting, which we can demonstrate with the clothesline.

Green clothespins area! GO!

Roughly stated,

**Permissive** = There are few, if any, rules for children's behavior either because parents believe that children will thrive as “free spirits” or because parents are under overwhelming stress or illness, or they lack experience and knowledge. Children may not know what kinds of expectations adults have for them and may misbehave to discover how far they can push. At the extreme (1), overly permissive or indulgent parenting can become child neglect.

**Authoritarian** = “Do as I say or I will punish you or withhold privileges.” Children may be obedient and appear to conform to stern adult expectations as long as they are under the control of those adults. But children may not internalize or accept as their own the adult rules and instead may “act up” or “act out” when the stern adults are not around to make them behave. At the extreme (10), authoritarian parents can become abusive.

**Authoritative** = “We have firm rules in our family, and you are expected to abide by them. We also have good times together, and we as parents will give you a lot of help and support in living by our rules.” Families in which parents are authoritative have high expectations for children, but parents and children interact a great deal, enjoy pleasant as well as necessary activities together, and express a high degree of warmth in their relationships.

The terms “permissive,” “authoritative,” and “authoritarian,” originally used by Diana Baumrind, may be confusing to parents. Barbara Coloroso, in her book *Kids Are Worth It! Giving Your Child the Inner Gift of Discipline* (1995), uses “jellyfish,” “backbone,” and “brick wall” to describe the three styles. Steve Goggin and Stephen Hamilton suggest that the three styles are “hands-off,” “work together,” and “take charge.” They also suggest that each of the three styles can be used appropriately depending on the circumstances. For example, children splashing and shouting in a swimming pool require careful supervision, but a “hands-off” approach is appropriate as long as the children are safe. If the play becomes dangerous, the adults must “take charge.”
Green clothespins area! GO!

At this point in the exercise a participant will often say that he or she was raised by permissive, or more often by authoritarian, parents and that “I turned out to be perfectly okay”—and “what was good enough for me is good enough for my children.” We suggest two possible ways for the workshop leader to respond to such a comment:

1. Healthy, functioning adults can come from every kind of parenting style. Many contributing members in all communities had parents who were either more permissive or more authoritarian than we might wish. But in the light of what we know now about what works best we can suggest “authoritative” parenting is the most promising style for families. Country and culture of origin add variety and complexity to every part of family life, including the ways in which parents provide guidance for children.

2. How many people in this group drive the same model car their parents drove when they were kids or use the same kitchen or laundry equipment? Certainly many of us survived and even thrived on the diet our mothers and fathers provided, but few caring parents today ignore all the recommendations from nutritionists about ways to protect the health of family members. In the field of child development new information influences recommendations about child-rearing practices. As a workshop leader I can encourage you to look at some of these recommendations—but each person must decide whether to incorporate them in their family lives. I will not pressure you to parent in ways that seem wrong to you, but I will try to tell you about alternative techniques in child discipline that seem to be more effective than more old-fashioned ways.

In summary, then, we have three general approaches to discipline:

Permissive
Authoritarian
Authoritative

Within the broad category of “authoritative” there is a range of choices (points 4, 5, 6, and 7 on the clothesline continuum). You can be strict as a parent or you can be somewhat permissive and still fall within the “authoritative” range. The important components seem to be that children understand clearly what adults expect from them, have warm relationships with their parents, and enjoy many family activities.

As we proceed through the exercises in this guide we will describe seven principles that form the foundation of “authoritative discipline.” As we discuss each of the principles, role plays or other activities will provide opportunities for practice.

There is no one way and certainly no right way to teach or discipline children. The exercises are designed to review the more effective techniques parents can use to live comfortably with their children. You will have heard them all and used many of them before. But as parents we can all get a little rusty. Sometimes, in the heat of certain moments that exist in all families, we
wish desperately for something to help us temper an emotional exchange with a child. At the least, we search for a technique that resolves a confrontation without loss of dignity for the child or for us, the parents. The seven basic principles of discipline are designed so that you will remember them during those difficult times. They won't always work—but, then, in the exciting business of parenting, nothing is guaranteed.

It is particularly important to remember that if you have a warm and loving relationship with your children and if you communicate with them effectively most of the time, specific techniques are unimportant. We all make mistakes. We all do the wrong thing with our children occasionally. Luckily for us, most children are remarkably tough, resilient, loving, and forgiving people. So if you goof, don't give up. But try again. And don't be afraid to say to your child, "I'm trying to work out some ways of being a better parent. What I just did (yelling, spanking) was not what I want to do. I'm sorry and I'm going to try again."

Guidelines for Discussion Leaders

How Can a Leader Use This Material?

First, as a leader
- You are not expected to be an expert, a child psychologist, or a family counselor.
- You are not responsible for answering every question about children and families.
- You are recognized as a leader by your group.
- You are willing and able to learn with your group.
- You are a resource person who has access to the specific, well-substantiated information presented here and who also possesses sources of other information.
- You are able to present some information to your group.
- You are able to help the members of your group discuss their feelings and observations.

Other Tips

- You will want to review and think about this material.
- This booklet provides sufficient material for four to six meetings or six hours of training. It is strongly recommended that if only one two-hour session can be provided, the leader or speaker present one or two of the principles in depth rather than attempting an overview of all seven principles.
- If you have time and inclination for extra meetings, all the better.
- Preparation time is essential if you are to be an effective leader.
- The specific suggestions offered are not intended to curb your creativity but to give you a strong lead.
- Let your group members know what they can and cannot expect of you.
• You may want to ask group members to make specific preparation for the meetings; certainly, you want their full participation in meetings.

Before your group begins to work with this material it may be helpful to summarize techniques participants currently use to control their children's behavior. To do this, make copies of the form "How Do You React to Your Children's Behavior?" and have participants fill it in by checking any procedure they use. *No one should put a name or identifying symbol on the sheets.* When participants have finished, the leader can collect the sheets, shuffle them, and redistribute them to the group. Each person should have the sheet of another anonymous member of the group. If any member receives his own form, the leader should reshuffle the forms. The leader then prepares a summary of the group's responses by asking participants to raise their hands each time a check mark appears on the paper they are holding. The summary for two groups of thirty parents each might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 Yell and scream</td>
<td>17 Threaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Explain reasons calmly</td>
<td>17 Distract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Shame my child</td>
<td>12 Remove privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Show disapproval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Ignore misbehavior</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Scold</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Isolate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Spank</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Let child experience consequences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summarizing the results, the leader can usually point out that most parents use a variety of methods to control or correct children's behavior. Additionally, most parents feel they have lots of room for improvement. *It may be necessary to remind a group that changes in parental behavior often lead to the child testing the parent.* For example, parents who attempt to use a positive nonphysical guidance technique instead of yelling all the time can expect a temporary increase in misbehavior as children try to figure out whether parents are seriously trying to change their behavior and whether they mean what they say when not yelling. Usually, if parents remain calm and persist in their efforts to use positive techniques, children's misbehavior will eventually diminish.

**All the methods listed are intended to correct misbehavior by letting a child know he or she has done something wrong. Effective discipline goes beyond creating awareness of wrongdoing to letting children know about acceptable alternatives.**

* If a group is unusual in that the parents use only one or two methods to control their children, or if many parents in the group feel they are perfect, the leader will have to adjust the suggested summary!
How Do You React to Your Children’s Behavior?

Check the techniques that apply to you.

1. **The way I usually correct my children is to**
   - [ ] Yell and scream
   - [ ] Explain reasons calmly
   - [ ] Shame my child
   - [ ] Show disapproval
   - [ ] Ignore misbehavior
   - [ ] Scold
   - [ ] Isolate
   - [ ] Spank
   - [ ] Let the child experience consequences
   - [ ] Threaten but don’t follow through
   - [ ] Distract
   - [ ] Remove privileges
   - [ ] Use rewards
   - [ ] Use humor
   - [ ] Other

2. **When I correct my children I feel**
   - [ ] Great! I’m a perfect parent and nothing I do can be improved.
   - [ ] Terrible! Everything I do seems wrong and makes our family life miserable.
   - [ ] So-so. Sometimes I’m effective, sometimes I make mistakes, but I’d like to improve.
   - [ ] I’m a good parent but would like to improve my ability to guide my children lovingly.
The Seven Principles of Discipline

Principle Number One

Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't do.

- or -

Focus on “do” instead of “don’t.”

Most of us react to children’s misbehavior. One of the goals of these workshops is to help us become proactive—that is, to think and plan ahead about ways to help our children develop self-control. If our language is overloaded with negative words (no, don’t, stop it, quit that, cut it out, shut up), our children may decide we are not very interesting to listen to and so quite effectively tune us out. When children hear many, many negative words, the meaning of those words is weakened. This may lead to a situation in which we really need a child to hear and obey us, but like the people in the story of the boy who cried “wolf” too often, the child ignores or disobeys us. For example, if a two-and-a-half-year-old hears “don’t touch the cup, the coffee table, the flowers, the dress, the radio, and the stove” she may (1) decide it is dangerous to touch anything and so become passive and uninterested in learning or (2) decide that adults just say “no” and that the way to deal with them is to touch as many things as you can before they get really mad. But, at two-and-a-half, she does not know that the “no” about the cup that is full of steaming coffee and the “no” about the stove are important because they relate to safety. The “no” about the dress may be important to the adult but is not critical to the safety of the child. If her parents restrict their use of strong negative words to critical situations of great importance, she is more likely to hear and respect the words they use.
**Examples and Exercises**

**Here are some examples and practice situations for changing “don’t” into “do”:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative response (“Don’t”)</th>
<th>Positive response (“Do”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t throw blocks.</td>
<td>Let’s see what we can build with blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit biting him.</td>
<td>Talk to him and tell him what you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t drop the egg.</td>
<td>Carry the egg in both hands like this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Translate these don’ts into dos:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative response (“Don’t”)</th>
<th>Positive response (“Do”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t pour water on the floor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t squeeze the cat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t hit your sister.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t turn on the TV until you finish your homework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Some more examples:**

- **Situation:** Mother and two-year-old Susie are out for an early spring walk. Susie has taken off her white sweater and is dragging it through the mud.
  - **Negative response (“Don’t”)**：“Don’t drag your sweater in the mud.”
  - **Positive response (“Do”)**：“Let’s tie your sweater around your waist, like this.”

- **Situation:** Three-year-old Philip has come to visit you for the first time. He loves your cat and proceeds to carry the poor creature by clutching two hands around the cat’s neck.
  - **Negative response (“Don’t”)**：“Don’t squeeze the cat.”
  - **Positive response (“Do”)**：“Hold the cat like this.” (demonstrating)

- **Situation:** Ten-year-old Duane wants to tell you about the morning ball game while his mouth is full of spaghetti.
  - **Negative response (“Don’t”)**：“Don’t talk with your mouth full.”
  - **Positive response (“Do”)**：“Chew, then swallow, then talk.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Negative response (&quot;Don’t&quot;)</th>
<th>Positive response (&quot;Do&quot;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four-year-old Kala is very angry because you will not give her a cookie. She screams, “You __________, I want a cookie.”</td>
<td>“Don't use that language around me, young lady.”</td>
<td>“When you are angry you can say, 'you're unfair or mean or unkind'.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homework Assignment**

Put a sheet of paper on top of your refrigerator or on the bulletin board. Every time you use a negative word put a check mark on your paper. At the end of twenty-four hours, how many check marks do you have? Can you improve your score by minus 10 by the following day? Think about the positive words you could use to let children know what they can do. Remember, you did not learn about the color “red” by hearing “this is not yellow or blue.”
Principle Number Two

Protect and preserve children's feelings that they are lovable and capable.

Children often act in ways they think adults expect them to act. If adults expect misbehavior—children misbehave. If adults expect children to be lovable and capable children will try to meet this expectation. In this discussion we will refer to a person's feelings of being lovable and capable as an IALAC (I am lovable and capable). An IALAC is a little bit like your spirit or your sense of humor. No one can see it, but it's an important part of the person you are. People need big strong IALACs if they are to love and be loved and if they are to feel good about their capacity to learn and to function well in the world. IALACs grow or shrink as a result of what a person experiences, particularly in relationships with other people.
### Examples

The following are some examples of ways in which adults can hurt or build children's IALACs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Hurtful response</th>
<th>Better response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter spills the milk he was carrying to the table.</td>
<td>“Can't you ever do anything right?”</td>
<td>“That's a hard job. We'll wipe it up and you can try again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan cries in frustration because she can't unscrew the lid on the peanut butter jar.</td>
<td>“You're too little to do that—let me.”</td>
<td>“Let's see if we can do it together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-year-old Jimmy runs away from you in the supermarket.</td>
<td>“What's the matter with you? You're acting like a baby. I thought you were a big boy.”</td>
<td>“I need your help in pushing the cart.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exercise

The leader can ask for two volunteers from the group. (If necessary, explain that the two have easy parts in this exercise because they will not have to speak.) By waving a “magic wand” the leader transforms the two volunteers into a three-year-old and a five-year-old and the rest of the group into the children's mother. Each of the “children” is given a piece of paper to represent their IALAC. The leader explains that the children are in day care while their mother, a single parent, is at work. Today is Friday and payday. On the way home mother and children must stop at the supermarket for groceries although all three are tired. The two children are asked to tear a piece off their IALAC papers if anything hurts their feelings during shopping. The children are not to speak: they express themselves by tearing or not tearing their IALACs. The group leader begins the trip through the supermarket and then asks the group to try out the things they hear parents say in supermarkets.

“Put that back. Don't touch anything!”

"Come back here or I'll take you to the car!"

"Wait till we get home."

“Don't squeeze that.”

“No candy, no gum, no soda, NO.”

After a few minutes the leader asks the volunteers to show their IALACs to the group. The leader then instructs the volunteers that, if the group can say or do anything to “heal” the IALACs, the volunteers should pick up a scrap of paper and put it on the larger one, as if they are repairing the torn IALACs. The leader then tells the group, “This is up to you,” and sits down. Usually it takes far longer to repair IALACs than to hurt them. It is important to think of IALAC building as essential to mental health.

### Exercise

For this exercise each participant should have a half sheet of newspaper torn into five pieces. Each piece represents one of the IALACs in the following episodes. As participants pick up the first small piece of paper, the group leader should explain that this paper represents Lita's (or Jesse's, Kris's, Shirley's, Mrs. Jones's) IALAC. As the leader reads the episodes aloud, participants tear small scraps off the IALAC if they believe events or what
is being said are damaging to it. After each episode, participants can hold up the IALACs and talk about what hurt or did not hurt. People usually vary in sensitivity and in the degree to which they feel hurt.

It's not just family members who affect children's feelings about themselves. People and experiences outside family and home are also powerful influences. Whenever possible, parents should serve as protectors by providing experiences for each child that foster feelings of belonging and connection.

**Practice Episodes**

Ask participants to imagine they are the central character in each of the following episodes. What happens to each IALAC?

1. Lita, age twelve, slept through her alarm, missed the school bus, and was yelled at by her mother, who had to drive her to school. When she arrived at school her best friend pointed out that she was wearing one brown and one black sock, her teacher gave her detention for being late, and she discovered she had left her math homework and her lunch at home.

2. Jesse, age four, managed to dress himself this morning. His mother gave him a kiss and told him he was really growing up. His big sister said, “Good for you.” His father invited him to help him take off the storm windows.

3. Kris, age two, became so engrossed in her sandbox that she wet her pants. Her grandmother said, “What a baby you are!” Her brother looked at her and held his nose. Her mother said she’d have to wear diapers for the rest of the day.

4. Shirley, adult, had an appointment with Pat, her supervisor, today. Pat told Shirley she was doing a fantastic job and asked her to help train some new staff members. Shirley tried a new casserole recipe for supper and everyone liked it. When she told her husband about Pat’s comments, he hugged her and said, “It’s about time someone other than me appreciated you!”

5. Mrs. Jones doesn’t know where the rent money will come from. Her husband was laid off last week and is so depressed he sits all day in front of the television. The baby cries constantly, and the two-year-old seems particularly whiny and keeps rubbing his ear. Mrs. Jones is afraid he may have an ear infection. She is trying to get enough courage to call the doctor when the phone rings. It is Miss Green, daughter Sharon’s first grade teacher. Miss Green is concerned because Sharon is falling behind her classmates in reading. She wonders if Mrs. Jones could spend some time each evening listening to Sharon read.

**Alternative Exercise**

Ask each workshop participant to hold a piece of paper representing the IALAC of the main character in a story you will read to them. If anything happens to the character that might be hurtful to his or her IALAC, participants are to tear a small piece off their paper. At the end of the story ask participants to hold up the IALACs for all to see. Discuss ways in which the stories could be changed to prevent IALAC injury. If you read *Today Was a Terrible Day*, stop reading at the end of the page before the note Miss Tyler wrote to Ronald Morgan. Instead of reading aloud Miss Tyler’s note ask participants to work in small groups to write the note they hope she would write. Read the letters aloud to all participants.

**Suggested Books**


Homework Assignment

Make an IALAC sign for your child. If your child is too young to understand it, put it where only you can see it. Every time you or anyone else says or does something that hurts your child, tear a little piece off the IALAC. How lovable and capable do you think your child feels at the end of the day? How can you fix the IALAC? Try this a second day. If you listen to yourself interact with others, you may not hurt other people’s IALACs as often. Catch your child being lovable and capable. Give him or her a wink, smile, pat, or hug.
Principle Number Three

Offer children choices only when you are willing to abide by their decisions.

Sometimes, probably because we want children to like us and because we want to be polite, we offer them too many, or inappropriate, choices. Children take us seriously when we offer them a choice, and often a difficult situation occurs because adults offered choices they didn't really mean.

Who would like a piece of a banana?
Examples and Exercises

Situation
Two children are engaged in an elaborate game of camping out under the dining room table.
It's shopping day, and your groceries are in short supply.

Likely to lead to trouble
Would you like to come to lunch now?
What would you like for breakfast today?

Instead, try
You campers will know it's lunchtime when the oven buzzer rings in five minutes (set buzzer).
Would you like toast and cheese or cereal for breakfast?

How would you fill in the blanks in the third column?

You are having dinner in a restaurant and have a limited supply of money.

What would you like to order?

You have one banana and three preschoolers in your kitchen.

Who would like a banana?

You are going to grandmother's for Sunday dinner. Grandma expects guests to be dressed up.

What would you like to wear to Grandma's?

It's your child's bedtime.

It's time for bed—okay?
Homework Assignment

Listen to yourself carefully for a week. Count the number of inappropriate choices you offer your child in the course of a day. On the next day, try to catch yourself before you offer an unfair choice. At this point, you may be feeling discouraged and unnatural. But remember you feel self-conscious anytime you learn a new skill. Learning to be an effective parent takes skill. When you learn to drive a car you have to stop and think about every move you make. After a while you drive almost without thinking about it and talk, sing, or listen to the radio as well. After a while new parenting skills also come naturally and without self-consciousness. In the beginning, however, it's really hard!
Occasionally, adult-child conflicts arise because some part of the physical setting or environment is inappropriate for young children or because adults expect more control or more mature behavior than children can achieve.
### Examples and Exercises

#### Behavior

A group of preschoolers have many milk spills at every meal. Their paper cups seem to overturn every other minute.

Fifteen-month-old Tommy sits next to four-year-old Karen at the dinner table. Tommy cannot resist the temptation to reach forward to play with Karen's braids, especially when his hands are sticky with applesauce or peanut butter.

Seven-year-old Sari's departure for school each day is often a time for tears as she wails, "Where's my math book?" or "I can't find my sneakers."

Eleven-year-old Kati comes home from school each day and makes a beeline for the cookie jar. She washes down a handful of cookies with two bottles of soda from the refrigerator.

Two-year-old Martha jumps on the couch over and over.

Five-year-old Luis always forgets to take his muddy boots off before he comes inside.

Eight-year-old twins Tom and Tina play well together but leave the living room floor littered with toys every night even though their parents have provided several boxes for toy storage.

#### Environmental changes

Provide heavy-bottomed wide plastic glasses or cups.

Move the children farther apart. Let an adult who is more adept at dodging sit where Karen sits.

The family establishes a box next to the door as "Sari's Place." Before she goes to bed each night she and her dad check to be sure everything she will need is in the box.

---

#### What would you do to change the environment in these examples?

Eleven-year-old Kati comes home from school each day and makes a beeline for the cookie jar. She washes down a handful of cookies with two bottles of soda from the refrigerator.

Two-year-old Martha jumps on the couch over and over.

Five-year-old Luis always forgets to take his muddy boots off before he comes inside.

Eight-year-old twins Tom and Tina play well together but leave the living room floor littered with toys every night even though their parents have provided several boxes for toy storage.
Homework
Assignment

Analyze one place in your home that needs an environmental change for your comfort or your child's comfort. Is it placing a box next to the sink so your child can wash and get a drink without help? Is it cleaning out a low kitchen cupboard and stocking it with pots and pans that your baby can play with while you cook? Is it asking an appliance store for a big cardboard box so that your children have something that's okay to climb on and you don't have to yell at them for climbing on the furniture? Write down what you did, and ask the leader to collect a written sentence from everyone in the group explaining what steps they would take in the situation. The leader can read the sentences aloud and anonymously if possible.
Principle Number Five*

Work with children instead of against them.

When we refinish furniture we are told we should always rub with the grain of the wood. Perhaps we should also work “with the grain of the child”! Sometimes, standing back and observing children and then figuring out mutually acceptable ways for them to do what they are trying to do can turn a conflict into a pleasant (or at least tolerable) experience.

*See supplementary material, “Understanding Temperament.”
**Examples and Exercises**

**Situation**

Five-year-old Sam wants to help his parents with their preparation of a Chinese meal. Efforts to persuade him to watch television or ride his bike have failed.

Eleven-month-old Leona turns her head away when offered food on a spoon. If the food is placed on her tray, however, she dives in with both hands and eats with obvious enjoyment.

**Solution**

Figure out the tasks Sam can do. Find a workplace for him in the kitchen and let him pitch in.

Put newspaper on the floor. Find a big bib and stand by with sponges.

**What would you do to change the situation in these examples?**

Eight-year-old Tony announces he only likes three foods: hamburgers, apples, and ice cream.

Twelve-year-old Maria has come to the horrifying realization that “meat is made from animals.” She has announced, in tears, that from now on she plans to be a vegetarian.

One rainy day four-year-old Leah cannot keep still. She rushes around the house running, jumping, and hopping.

At a library story hour three-year-old Jeff turns suddenly shy and clings to you. He wants to sit on your lap to hear the stories and refuses to join the other children.
Homework Assignment

Plan to do something nice with your child. Maybe it could be

- reading stories
- singing songs
- taking a walk
- baking cookies

Give yourself a pat on the back every time you are flexible in meeting the needs of your child. For example, if you planned to read stories and your child insists on jumping, do you tell a story about jumping, jump together, or go outside so your child can jump around the yard? Sometimes parents get mad when they plan to do something nice and their children choose not to follow the plan. It's usually easier and more pleasant to change the plan than change the child. Of course, some plans can't be changed, such as a trip to the doctor or catching a specific train. When you are dealing with a child's objections to a plan that can't be changed, it is necessary to be pleasant, calm, and extremely firm.

Parents who are wishy-washy or who agree to every childish whim do not provide good examples of responsible adult behavior. With very young children who resist a parent's request, it may be easier on both parent and child if the adult picks up and carries a resisting child rather than pleading, cajoling, or threatening.
**Principle Number Six**

Give children safe limits they can understand. Recognize their feelings without accepting their actions. Maintain your authority calmly and consistently. Let children experience the gentle consequences of their actions if they “forget” or ignore rules.

Children see the world differently from adults. Rules and safety precautions that may be obvious to adults need to be stated and explained clearly and simply to children. Be sure children know your expectations for their behavior. It’s not fair to scold for a violation of rules they did not understand.

Maria, we have a rule that you may not play with knives. We’ll have to put your project away for today. Tomorrow we’ll try to find a safe way for you to do it.
Examples and Exercises

Situation

Timothy (age three) is happily pouring milk onto his dinner plate.

Cleo (age two) has pushed a chair close to the stove so she can see what's bubbling in the pots.

Jana (age six) has "borrowed" the carving knife to try soap carving, which she read about in a magazine.

Jonathan (age five) is having a screaming tantrum because you will not let him go out to play (he has been sick and the weather is cold and windy).

Brett (age four) is a fastidious eater. He deposits all unwanted bits of food on his mother's plate.

Six-year-old Tania has wandered to a nearby playground in spite of your rule that she must stay in the backyard.

Solution

"Timothy, milk stays in your cup or in the pitcher. When your cup is empty, you may pour some more. But you may not pour it over your dinner." If Timothy continues to pour, the adult can remove the cup and pitcher, saying, "Milk stays in the cup or pitcher." Later on you may want to offer Tim a couple of unbreakable containers in the bath, saying "This would be a fine time to practice pouring."

"No, you must never do that! You might get burned if you are so close to the stove." Show Cleo where it is safe for her to play. If she attempts to return to the stove, remove her from the kitchen and give her some toys to play with. If necessary, block her access to the kitchen with a safety gate or low piece of furniture.

"Jana, you must ask before you borrow tools. That knife is dangerously sharp. You may not use it. Let me see if I can help you find one that would be safe."

"Jonathan, you're really mad and disappointed, but I cannot let you go outside today. I'm afraid the wind might make your head hurt again."

What would you do to change the situation in these examples?

______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
Ask members of the group to describe episodes from their own experience to demonstrate ways of setting safe limits or rules for children. What happens if a child breaks one of the rules? Is there a gentle, natural, or logical consequence that will help the child understand that rules are important and necessary?

For example, a child who refuses to wear mittens may have cold hands as she walks from the house to the car in the winter. A child who lets dirty clothes accumulate under his bed may find that his favorite pants are not clean for him to wear to school. Be sure that consequences are (1) related to the child's action and (2) developmentally appropriate in that the child understands the link between his or her action and the consequence. Note: A spanking is a punishment, not a consequence. Punishments can sometimes have short-term effects, but consequences are more helpful in changing behavior in the long run.
Principle Number Seven

Set a good example. Speak and act only in the ways you want children to speak and act.

Look back at our opening definitions of “discipline” and “disciplinarian.” The importance of parents as models for children cannot be overstated.
Exercise
Correct the following:

**Poor example**

“Goddamn it, Bobbie, quit stalling and finish your dinner.”

“My husband won’t look at a fresh vegetable, but he makes the kids eat them.”

“My husband never puts his clothes away, but he expects the kids to put dirty clothes in the hamper and clean clothes in their drawers.”

“I’m too old to stop smoking, but I’m not going to let my children start.”

“I don’t have to eat breakfast because I’m a grown-up, but you’re just a child, so do as I say.”

“Come give me a kiss, you spoiled brat.”

“If you bite your sister, I’ll bite you.”

“If you don’t stop that crying, I’ll give you something to cry about.”

**Better example**

But while the group is together see if you can identify one thing you feel you do well as a parent (maybe someone can tell you what you do well if you can’t think of anything). Then describe one way in which you would really like to improve as a parent. Try to set a “homework” task for yourself that allows you to improve a little at a time. Growing as a parent seems to come about slowly and gently—not dramatically and suddenly.
A Reminder List: Positive Guidance Techniques

1. Tell children what to do. Cut down on your use of negative words. Don’t say “don’t” too often!

2. Protect and preserve children’s feelings of being lovable and capable.

3. Offer children choices only when you are willing to accept their decisions.

4. Change the environment instead of children’s behavior.

5. Work with “the grain” of children instead of against it.

6. Give children safe limits they can understand.

7. Set a good example. Avoid situations like the one of a parent spanking a child “to teach you not to hit your little brother.”
Practice Episodes for Teachers of Young Children

How Do All Seven Principles Work Together?

- Tiffany is a four-year-old who spits whenever she is angry, disappointed, or frustrated. For example, while she and her mother were making cookies, her mother would not allow Tiffany to crack the eggs, so Tiffany spat at her.

  Can you use the seven principles of child guidance to help Tiffany's mother cope with her daughter?

- Gerald is shy, almost to the point of not speaking. He nods or shakes his head and smiles if adults ask him a question. You are pretty certain he is not deaf and that he is shy primarily because his family lived in almost total rural isolation before he came to the preschool program. Gerald may be perceived as a behavior problem unless you can design a program that allows him to move gradually into social relationships and experiences.

  Design a preventive discipline program that will allow Gerald to develop at his own rate and in his own way.

- Jasper cries very easily and gives up if a problem seems too hard for him. Small for his age (he is four years, five months), he clings to his mother in the morning, and she says he does not want to come to school. He enjoys sitting on an adult's lap to look at books and occasionally enjoys play dough. His father appears to be disappointed in his son and wants him to be more of a "regular boy." His father also claims that Jasper's mother and teachers are too "soft" and that they should force Jasper to "shape up."

  Outline a week's program for Jasper and plan a conference with Jasper's father.

- Kimi appears to be a shy girl who clings to her mother, holding on to her mother's skirt and attempting to hide behind her whenever possible. Her mother says Kimi refuses to leave her side for any reason, and she doesn't know what will happen when Kimi starts school next year. At four, Kimi is still in diapers and carries a bottle. She appears to be afraid of strangers and refuses all overtures of friendship.

  Brainstorm ways to initiate a conversation about discipline with Luis's mother. Which of the seven principles might be most useful to her?

How can you and Kimi's parents work together to help Kimi's IALAC grow and help Kimi move toward more grown-up behavior?

- When you arrive at his house, Luis is busy digging in the dirt with two neighborhood children. His mother says she rarely sees him except for meals. He "plays out with the kids all the time." With three younger boys to care for, Luis's mother says it is a relief to have a four-year-old who is so independent. Her concern about Luis is that he is picking up bad language from the neighbors' kids and she can't break him of the habit, although she and her husband beat him for it regularly.

  Outline a week's program for Luis and plan a conference with Luis's mother.
• Bruce is a whirling, noisy, extremely active three-year-old. He is the seventh child in a family of eight. While you visit his house, he climbs all over you, empties your pocketbook, gets up on the kitchen counter to search through the cupboard, upsets a box of cereal, and pokes his finger through a hole in the screen door, causing the hole to enlarge considerably. His mother talks constantly, telling Bruce to "stop it," to "sit down," and to "act nice"—all of which Bruce ignores. You do not hear Bruce speak, although he smiles a lot and seems to understand what's going on around him.

Ask members of the group to role play a conversation between Bruce's mother and the visiting teacher. Which principle might be most helpful for the mother?

• Sunshine is a whirlwind from the moment she enters the classroom until the moment she leaves. She speeds from paints to blocks to doll corner and back to paints. Her parents complain that she is a "regular devil" and into everything at home. Her mother complains that she is unable to control Sunshine. You feel that she is an extremely active, curious, healthy little girl.

Design a program of activities for Sunshine for one week. Include both general class activities you would encourage Sunshine to participate in and specific ideas for Sunshine. How will you explain this program to Sunshine's parents?

• Melinda is a four-year-old girl, the only child of parents who live in an isolated rural area. Their small house is spotlessly clean with no sign of toys, books, or clutter of any kind. Melinda also is very clean: at the time of your visit she is wearing a yellow dress and black shoes. While you were in the home, Melinda lay on the couch sucking her thumb and watching game shows. Melinda's mother tells you that Melinda is a good, quiet child who causes her no trouble and who watches television most of the time. The mother adds that she herself suffers from bad headaches and finds it difficult to keep up with her housework.

How can we help Melinda's mother understand that a four-year-old needs to be a little active, noisy, and messy?

• Pierre is a quiet, inactive little boy who refuses to join any group activity in the classroom. He enjoys being read to and looks happy and relaxed when the teacher cuddles him and they listen to records together.

How can you work out a program for Pierre using the seven child guidance principles?

• Nilda is just three and a terror in the day care classroom because of her biting behavior. She bites children and adults whenever they get in her way, take something away from her, or do something she does not like. Her parents report that Nilda does not bite at home because she "wouldn't dare."

Which of the seven child guidance principles can you use to help Nilda stop biting? You may choose more than one.
Practice Episodes for Parents of Young Children

How Do All Seven Principles Work Together?

• Mrs. Smith lives down the street from you. Her son, Terry, has just turned two and is the terror of the neighborhood because he bites other children. Mrs. Smith comes to your house for coffee one day and asks for your advice. She doesn't want to follow Mrs. Jones's suggestion, which is to bite Terry back whenever he bites a child.

How can you help Mrs. Smith use one or more of the seven principles of discipline to solve her problem?

• At a parents' meeting, a father shares his concern about the poor eating habits of his four-year-old son, Juan. Juan will only eat bananas, hot dogs, and peanut butter sandwiches.

Which one (or more) of the seven principles might help Juan and his father deal with this problem?

• Seven-year-old Theresa cannot seem to remember to put her clothes away and to keep her toys in order. Her mother works and finds it very annoying to nag and to pick up after Theresa all the time. Punishments and scoldings have no effect on Theresa's behavior.

Which of the seven principles could Theresa's parents use to deal with this problem?

• Bobo is an active, energetic fifteen-month-old boy. He is into everything and has already been taken to the emergency room three times as a result of his explorations. The last episode involved a stomach pump because Bobo drank from a bottle of cleaning fluid. Before that he had received an electric shock when he poked his fork into the toaster.

Which of the seven principles of discipline can Bobo's family use to keep Bobo safe? Outline a specific course of action it should take.
Practice Episodes for Group Leaders Working with Older Children

How Do All Seven Principles Work Together?

- As leader, for a preholiday activity you have prepared an array of exciting materials to create holiday greeting cards. All the children are pleased and excited and want to get right to work, except ten-year-old Pam, who tells you she hates artwork and doesn't want to make a greeting card.

  Your group has worked very hard to prepare a special snack as a birthday celebration for one member of the group whose mother has been hospitalized for two weeks. Unexpectedly, one eight-year-old reaches across the table and sweeps the decorated cupcakes onto the floor. In the silence that follows he bursts into tears and runs out of the room.

- You are trying to have a serious planning discussion with your group of eleven- and twelve-year-olds. You hope to involve them in the decision-making process and at the same time learn more about their interests. Instead of responding seriously, the girls begin to whisper and giggle, clearly leaving out and talking about one member of the group.

- A parent has called you to discuss her worries about her thirteen-year-old daughter, who is unknown to you. The mother believes her daughter has a "bad reputation." She is smoking secretly, meeting boys after school, neglecting her schoolwork, and behaving in a sulky and secretive fashion. The mother has called you because you work with girls and she has heard you relate well to them.

- Bryan has always been an enthusiastic member of your group. Now that he is twelve he seems to be a "changing personality." He is quiet, often absent, and his mother reports that he spends a great deal of time alone doing nothing or listening to the radio. His mother hopes he will continue to be an active member of your group.

How would you use the seven principles to deal with each situation described on this page?
Practice Episodes for Group Leaders and Parents of Teens

**Principle 1**
Tell teens what they can do instead of what they can't do.

Change these “don’ts” into “dos.”

| Don’t stay out late. | __________________________ |
| Don’t talk on the phone all night. | __________________________ |
| Don’t leave your clothes on the floor. | __________________________ |

**Principle 2**
I A L A C (“I am lovable and capable”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Change these statements</th>
<th>To these</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen has just finished washing the dishes but has left two pots “to soak.”</td>
<td>“You’re so lazy—can’t you do anything right?”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You and teen are going to shopping mall.</td>
<td>“You’re a mess—go change your clothes.”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen has 3 Bs and a C on a report card.</td>
<td>“If you worked harder you could get better grades.”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principle 3**
Offer a choice only when you accept the child’s decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Trouble statement</th>
<th>Change to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are willing to open your home to teen’s friends.</td>
<td>“You can invite friends over tonight.”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your family is going to have dinner with your mother.</td>
<td>“Go change into something more suitable.”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You and teen are grocery shopping.</td>
<td>“What shall we have for supper?”</td>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principle 4
Change the environment instead of attempting to change teen behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Effective discipline would be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen has two friends over to watch TV, and they become loud and obnoxious in the living room.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen drops books, coat, and other possessions on the floor in the front hall when coming home from school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen leaves kitchen a mess every afternoon after having an after-school snack.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principle 5
Work with teens instead of against them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You want your fourteen-year-old to be in at 9:30 on Friday night, and everyone else has a 10:30 curfew.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You want teen to be an active member of a local youth group, but teen doesn't want to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen wants a haircut you consider to be unbecoming and inappropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen wants to get a job at a fast food restaurant. You are afraid he will not be able to work and maintain his grades.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principle 6
Give teens firm, safe limits they can understand. Use natural and logical consequences instead of punishments when rules are broken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen takes snack into living room each day and leaves sticky glasses and plates on the furniture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen plays loud music on a radio late at night when you are trying to sleep.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen leaves bathroom a mess every day after taking a shower.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principle 7
Set a good example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>What should you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You hate to go to the dentist. When you get a toothache you complain a lot and say frequently, &quot;I know I should call the dentist but I just don't want to.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A neighbor has a death in the family. You say to your family, &quot;I know I should go over there but I don't know what to say,&quot; and you stay at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don't want your teen to use drugs but you have smoked cigarettes for years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen mimics a child with a handicapping condition by limping and waving arms about her head.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be a Success as a Disciplinarian with Very Young Children

The principles of discipline and guidance for babies and toddlers are similar to those for older children, but the emphasis may vary. Can you match each of the principles listed below with one good example from the page of “illustrations”?

- Be positive. Show or tell babies and toddlers what they can do. Cut down on the use of the word “no” and other negative directions.
- Enjoy yourself and enjoy the children. Pleasure is contagious—let the children catch fun from you.
- Adjust schedules so that children are never overtired or too hungry. Alternate active times with quiet, restful times. Take children outside every day.
- Supervise in an informal, loving, but constant way.
- Understand children’s development so that you have appropriate expectations for behavior. Don’t expect too much too soon. For example, don’t pressure very young children to share too much too soon.
- Create an interesting environment with plenty of playthings. Adult trash is often children’s treasure—but it must be safe.
- Change the environment to keep it safe and interesting. Bored babies and toddlers will find ways to make life more interesting—and sometimes more dangerous.
- Enforce rules clearly, briefly, consistently, and politely. Don’t have more rules than are absolutely necessary.
- Smile and say something positive whenever you can: “You are touching Donald gently and he likes it when you pat him softly.”
- Scoldings and punishments are very rarely useful in child care. If you have to use them, keep them short and sweet.
The following illustrations of good discipline for babies and toddlers are based on the principles described on the handout “Be a Success.”

1. Susie (eighteen months) watches when Tony (thirty-six months) bumps his head and cries. Susie picks up a truck and holds it out toward Tony. Tony’s dad says, “Thank you, Susie, for helping Tony feel better. In a minute I think he’ll enjoy playing with that truck.”

2. Velma Green notices that her baby seems to enjoy crawling under tables. She brings a large cardboard box into the room and puts it on its side with a blanket half covering the opening.

3. Kenny (ten months) grabs Mary’s hair and pulls. Mary says, “No, no, Kenny, that hurts.” As she disentangles the hair from Kenny’s fist she says, “Touch me gently like this,” and demonstrates.

4. Two toddlers want the same book. Each tries to pull it away from the other. Their caregiver offers a second book, saying, “There are enough books for each of you.”

5. Seven-month-old Jason has pulled up a corner of the rug and is attempting to chew on it. His mother puts a chewable doll in his hand and moves him to the center of the rug.

6. Eleven-month-old Samantha drops everything off her high chair tray. Her parent removes her from the chair and shows her how to drop small blocks into a large plastic pail.

7. When Mrs. D. enters the room, she sees two twenty-month-old toddlers gently exploring each others’ faces with their fingertips. She moves close to them and watches carefully but does not interfere.

8. Nineteen-month-old Sam wants to run after his dad as he leaves the child care room in the morning. When his caregiver prevents him from leaving the room, Sam throws himself flat on the floor in a tantrum. His caregiver sits next to him, saying, “It’s hard to see your dad leave, but he’ll be back. When you feel better, we’ll find the red truck you like.”

9. When her baby is irritable or crying, Patti often gets out a jar of bubble solution, seats herself in the rocking chair, and blows bubbles.

10. Lunchtime in the day care toddler room is chaotic and stressful for adults and children. The staff decides to change the routine by taking the toddlers outside in the midmorning, coming in for a brief quiet time, and having lunch half an hour earlier than usual.

11. Andrew (twenty-two months) scoops water out of the sink and pours it on the floor. His father says, “Andrew, keep the water in the sink. See if you can fill this pot with water,” and stands nearby to help Andrew remember.

12. Mrs. Green is surprised to find that the babies in her infant room spend more time with a large collection of well-washed plastic detergent bottles than with any of the commercial toys.

13. One-year-old Keith pinches his mother’s cheek. She says firmly, “No, Keith, that hurts,” puts him on the floor, and finds a toy for him.
Understanding Temperament*

**Nine Traits of Temperament**

1. **Activity level:** how active is the child generally, from an early age?
2. **Distractibility:** how easily is the child distracted? Can he or she pay attention?
3. **Persistence:** does the child stay with something he or she likes? How persistent or stubborn is the child when he or she wants something?
4. **Adaptability:** how does the child deal with transition and change?
5. **Approach/Withdrawal:** what is the child's initial response to newness: new places, people, foods, clothes?
6. **Intensity:** how loud is the child generally, whether happy or unhappy?
7. **Regularity:** how predictable is the child in his or her patterns of sleep, appetite, and bowel habits?
8. **Sensory threshold:** how does the child react to sensory stimuli such as noise, bright lights, colors, smells, pain, warm weather, tastes, and the texture and feel of clothes: is he or she easily bothered? easily overstimulated?
9. **Mood:** what is the child's basic mood? Do positive or negative reactions predominate?

Children reveal differences in temperament at very early ages. One baby coos and waves her arms in delight at the sight of a colorful musical mobile over her crib, but another baby of the same age screams at the sight of the same thing. One toddler enjoys banging a wooden spoon on pots and pans, but his twin brother runs away from the noise, holding both hands over his ears. One five-year-old persists in putting together a fifty-piece puzzle while his friend announces “too hard for me!” and looks for something else to do. Differences in temperament often help to explain differences among children in the same family. A parenting practice that “works” with one child may fail with another. Parents may find it helpful to look carefully at their own temperaments as well as the temperaments of their children in order to see where they fit together comfortably—and where extra effort needs to be taken to increase compatibility. For example, a parent who enjoys quiet activities such as reading or knitting may be surprised to have a daughter who is temperamentally extremely active. She will have to make extra efforts to meet her child's need for physical activity. A parent who is a gourmet cook and enjoys a wide variety of foods may be disconcerted to have a child with a low threshold for new tastes who wants to eat familiar foods at every meal.

The following is intended as a casual observation tool for parents who wish to look at their own temperaments and/or the temperament of a child. It is not a test! We suggest that a parent use a symbol (for example, “X”) to mark positions on each line for his or her own temperament. Use another symbol (such as “*”) to indicate where the child may be on the same line. Study the “Nine Traits of Temperament” carefully before you do this. We cannot predict or tell you what you will learn by doing this exercise: you will have to do that for yourselves. You may be surprised to discover, however, close similarities or wide disparities between you and one of your children. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?”

*Dr. Stanley Turecki, in his book *The Difficult Child* (Bantam, 1985) describes temperament as “the natural, inborn style of behavior.” Understanding temperament can be helpful in increasing the comfort of fit between an adult and children.
Looking at Temperament

1. **Activity level**
   - Very active
   - Not active

2. **Rhythmicity/regularity**
   - Very rhythmical
   - Arrhythmical

3. **Persistence**
   - Very persistent
   - Nonpersistent

4. **Sensitivity to stimuli**
   - **Taste**
     - Very sensitive
     - Not very sensitive
   - **Tactile**
     - Very sensitive
     - Not very sensitive
   - **Auditory**
     - Very sensitive
     - Not very sensitive
   - **Visual**
     - Very sensitive
     - Not very sensitive
   - **Olfactory**
     - Very sensitive
     - Not very sensitive

5. **Quality of mood**
   - Very positive (happy)
   - Negative (generally sad)

6. **Distractability**
   - Highly distractible
   - Hard to distract

7. **Approach/withdrawal**
   - Very reluctant to enter
   - Welcomes/enjoys new situations

8. **Intensity**
   - Very intense
   - Laid back

9. **Adaptability**
   - Adapts easily to new situations
   - Finds it difficult to adapt to new situations
What about Time-Out? And Spanking?

For years many parents and child care providers have relied on "time-outs" to manage the behavior of children. Certainly if anyone—child or adult—is losing control and at risk for hurting or offending another person or damaging property a short period of time in which to calm down, reflect, and regain self-control can be useful. All too often, however, "time out" is used as a punishment, as, for example:

"If you don't pick up your toys right now you're going into time out."

For parents who are struggling not to hit or hurt their children the use of time-outs may be an important step in the direction of effective guidance. However, we believe that time-outs can be a violation of our first guidance principle, "Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't do." Being put in time-out lets children know they have done something that is not acceptable to the adult but does not help them understand what they should have done instead. Understanding what they could have done requires conversation with a person, and time-out is a solitary activity. In addition, we believe that an adult command to "Take a time-out and think about what you just did" is counter-productive. If the child does think about what he or she just did it is likely to generate feelings of anger or resentment. Instead of isolating a child who has, for example, hit another child, it will eventually be more effective to do one or more of the following:

1. Tell the child what he or she can do. "Use words to tell your friend you are angry," or ask the child, "What could you do instead of hitting?"

2. Protect the child's feeling that he or she is lovable and capable. "I know you can use words instead of hitting. It's hard, but I know you can do it."

3. Offer a choice. "Can you play safely now or shall we find something else for you to do?" or

4. Change the environment. "You need to play away from [child you was hit] until we can be sure you will remember not to hit."

5. Work with the child. "We all get mad sometimes. We'll work together on what to do when you're mad."

6. Give the child safe limits. "Our rule is that we do not hurt people. If you hurt someone you cannot play with them for a while."

7. Set a good example. "Sometimes when I get mad I have to count to ten to keep myself under control. I can help you learn to do that."
Are all seven steps necessary every time? Probably not, but even using one or two might teach a child more about acceptable behavior than simply being to “Take a time-out.”

Obviously, time-out is never appropriate for use with babies and almost always inappropriate for toddlers. Does this mean we should never use it? We believe it can be a useful, occasional strategy, particularly when adults demonstrate that they use it themselves, as when, for example, a parent says, “I can feel myself losing my patience with you kids—I’m going to take a time-out so I can calm down and think about this.” And then the parent comes back and says something like, “I feel calmer and here’s what I think we should do.” Used in this way, children can see that time-out works well and may choose or agree to use it themselves. But when it is used as a punishment it is unlikely to be any more effective than any other punishment.

And Spanking?

“Parents usually hit children because of their own frustration and anger. These actions may occur after previously unsuccessful attempts to control children or they may be the parent’s first response to a child’s behavior. Many parents who hit have personal difficulties and stresses, but many are merely repeating the same child-rearing techniques used by their parents without considering the consequences of their behaviors. The consequences of spanking for children are the following lessons:

1. Those who love you the most are also those who hit you.
2. It is right to hit those you are close to.
3. It is OK to hit those who are smaller than you.
4. Violence is OK when other things don’t work.

Dear Workshop Participant:

You recently attended a workshop series titled, “Discipline Is Not a Dirty Word.” To help us evaluate and continually improve educational programs for parents, we need input from program participants. Please complete this questionnaire and return it to your workshop leader. Please do not sign your name on the questionnaire. Thank you!

Please rate your answers 1–5 by circling the appropriate number. The information that you provide will be used to plan, design, and implement future programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>poor</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you enjoy the program?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent was the material understandable?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What value would you give the materials and handouts you received?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your teacher’s ability?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you find most helpful about the program?

What improvements could you suggest?
Do you remember what you did before you started the program compared to what you do now that you've participated in the program? Look at the statements below and at the numbers next to each statement. The first group of numbers is what you did before, the second group is for what you do now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Before attending</th>
<th>After attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used positive language (used “do” instead of “don’t”) to direct my children</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered “choices” carefully—only when I meant it</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to protect and enhance my child’s self-esteem</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set a good example for my children by my own behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed things in our home environment to reduce the likelihood of misbehavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added things to our home environment to increase the likelihood of good behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let my children learn from the consequences of their behavior (e.g., clothes not placed in the hamper will not be washed)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained and consistently enforced family rules</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you give an example of how you have used any of the information presented to improve your discipline practices?

Other comments:

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Summary Sheet

Effective Guidance Techniques

1. Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't do.

2. Protect and nurture children's feelings of being lovable and capable.

3. Offer children choices only when you are prepared to accept the decisions they make.

4. Change the environment instead of the behavior.

5. Work with children instead of against them.

6. Give children firm limits they can understand. Use natural or logical consequences instead of punishment when children misbehave.

7. Set a good example. Speak and act only in ways you hope children will speak and act.

For more information:
www.cyfernet.org

This page may be copied and handed out to participants.
For more information visit the Children Youth and Family Extensions Research Network: www.cyfernet.org/
The word discipline is closely related to the word disciple. A disciple is a follower, or one who learns from a leader. So a disciplinarian can be seen as a teacher and discipline as the attitudes and behaviors that the leader hopes a follower will acquire as his or her own.

Discipline Is Not a Dirty Word lists seven principles of discipline that parents, teachers, and others can use with children. These include focusing on "do" instead of "don't" statements; helping children to feel lovable and capable; offering children appropriate choices; changing the environment rather than the child's behavior in certain situations; working with rather than against children; giving children safe limits they can understand; and setting a good example.

Sometimes, in the heat of certain moments that exist in all families, we wish desperately for something to help us temper an emotional exchange with a child. The seven principles are designed to help you remember them during difficult times.