

Discipline

Copy Right: dr H Heyns

Children are looking for boundaries and therefore are constantly testing them. This leads to lots of frustration, friction and increased stress levels in an already stressful home environment. Parents tend to give in, keeping some peace rather than creating boundaries, which is a short term solution creating a long term problem. Children that are used to getting their own way, grow up insecure and become difficult to manage children, that will be an embarrassment where-ever you take them.

As soon as they reach one year, your beautiful little angel loses its wings and turns into a willful, stubborn, individualistic, fearless and selfish little creature. Even though they keep on loving you, they do not care one little bit about your needs. Only about what they want and how to get it. And this has got nothing to do with their needs. They will carry on and on and on in order to get what they want, whether they need it or not. 90% of the screaming and temper tantrums are about trying to manipulate you. An unfortunately, every time you give in, you teach him that the correct way of asking is by throwing a temper tantrum – because it works!!!

Here is a few principles. Keep your calm. ALWAYS!!!! They cannot reason with a calm parent that is not loosing her temper to. You will remain then on top of the situation, rather than being dictated to by your child. Keep a stressball at hand – you will probably need it.

NEVER give in to a temper tantrum. This teaches them that it works, and therefore the temper tantrum will with more regular intervals be repeated. Turn around and walk away as if the child does not exist. When the child calms down you can go and gently tell her that you cannot hear or understand her if she screams. Persuade her to gently communicate with you.

In order to discipline them and get them to listen to you – you need to be very patient and repeat the principles about a thousand times over. They will eventually catch on and realize mommy and daddy mean what they are saying. Also remember that threatening punishment does NOT work. The trick in discipline lies in the doing what you promised.

The two cornerstones of discipline are:

1. Consistency
2. Consequence

Consistency:

This means that there are certain rules that are enforced by all the caregivers. An example will be like driving in the car seat. No amount of screaming or fussing changes this rule. And it stands with mommy and daddy.

The other part of consistency is to stand together – always agree in front of the children if it relates to discipline issues with the children. Meaning that if the one parent disciplines the other parent must agree even if he or she disagrees. The one parent is not allowed to take the child out of the naughty corner if the other parent puts him in there. By supporting one another even when it is difficult not only builds your own relationship, it also prevents the children from playing you two up against one another, contributing to the conflict.

Consequence:

This means that children do not listen. They hear you; they understand you and then they choose not to listen. They will never learn to listen to your words unless it is supported by your actions.

So if he is doing something wrong tell him the following:

1. This is what you are doing that is wrong
2. This is what I am going to do if you do it when you do it again.

Knowing kids, he will push his boundary and try the naughty thing again, just to see your reaction. And then it is of the utmost importance to let the consequence that you promised happen.

Do not just say 'no' or 'stop it' or 'it is enough'. Have you ever realized how many times you tell your child 'no' and then noticed how many times you ignore him when he says it. Do the math.....

Let us take an example: Your son is sitting on the couch and as you walk pass he throws you with a block. You then go to him, make eye contact and explain to him what he is doing wrong: Use his name, do not throw mommy with blocks, you are not allowed to throw things at people. After you told him what he did wrong, give him a consequence. 'If you throw mommy again I will put the blocks away in the cupboard, or I will put you in your naughty corner, or I will take the sweet away, or I will switch off the TV, etc. Get creative with the consequence. It can be anything as long as he does not like it and you will be able to do it.

Now you leave the room or do whatever you want to, but I can almost promise you that he will throw you again. Remember he is testing the boundaries. Now this is the make or break. You have to deliver on your promises otherwise the child wins!!!! Very calmly you go back to the child and look him in the eye. Call his name and say: 'I have told you not to throw me with the blocks, and I said that I will put them away if you throw me with them again.' Then take those blocks and put them away. Immediately.

You can expect your child to throw a temper tantrum trying to get you to change your mind, but under no circumstance give in to the temper tantrum.

If you keep up doing this consistently they will start listening as they will realize their parents makes good on their promises. And then the worst is over. But remember: They will always test their boundaries.

Good luck. It is difficult, but the results are rewarding.

Happy Parenting.