

Healthy Discipline

► Understanding why your child is misbehaving is the first step to healthy discipline. Learn practical ways to calm or redirect a bad behavior.

Reasons for Misbehavior

Children misbehave for many reasons. The first step to healthy discipline is understanding why your child is misbehaving. Consider the following before deciding on an appropriate form of discipline:

- The child may be too young to know that his or her actions are wrong.
- The child may not be able to express himself or herself and may become angry or upset.
- The child may be stressed by a change, such as moving to a new home.
- The child may feel as if he or she is not getting your attention for good behavior.
- The child wants more independence and feels confined by you.



10 Healthy Strategies That Work

- 1. Show and Tell:** Model behaviors you want to see. Explain things with calm words and actions.
- 2. Set Limits:** Be clear and consistent with your rules. Make sure your children understand them.
- 3. Give Consequences:** Calmly and firmly explain consequences. Be prepared to follow through. Do not punish by taking away necessities, such as food.
- 4. Hear Them Out:** Listen to your children. Let them finish explaining before jumping to conclusions. Discuss with them before giving a consequence. If more independence is needed, increase responsibilities with assigning chores, selecting meals, and picking out clothing.
- 5. Give Them Your Attention:** Reinforce good behavior and discourage bad behavior by giving your child attention. All children need their parents' attention.
- 6. Catch Them Being Good:** Notice good behavior, and praise it. Children need to know when they do something good.
- 7. Know When to Respond:** Do not act immediately or rashly. Ignoring bad behavior can be a good way of stopping it, as long as it is not dangerous. It can also teach children a natural consequence to their actions.
- 8. Be Prepared for Trouble:** Plan for situations when your child might misbehave, and prepare them for how to behave.
- 9. Redirect Bad Behavior:** Children often misbehave out of boredom. Find something else for your child to do.
- 10. Call a Time-Out:** When a specific rule is broken, calling a time-out can be an effective punishment. A time-out also helps children learn and practice self-management skills.



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