

Parenting Your Difficult Child

Parenting a difficult child can be an overwhelming experience. However, determining what your acting-out child needs from you and what is effective and appropriate discipline could help improve his or her behavior.

Determining Your Child's Needs

Children aren't always going to behave, but if you take certain steps now, you could curb negative behavior before it becomes a major family disruption.

- › **Spend quality time with your children.** You are busy with work and other responsibilities, but it's important to find time for your children to better understand their physical and emotional needs.
- › **Find a group where your child fits in.** Children who don't have a strong social network and a sense of belonging can often turn to negative influences and acting-out behavior.
- › **Develop a routine.** This can give children a sense of control.
- › **Make plans.** Take time to discuss upcoming activities with your children to give them something to look forward to.

Finding Effective Discipline for Your Child

There will be occasions when children fail to act appropriately. At these times it is important for children to learn that there are consequences for their behavior.

- › Natural consequences—the “let nature take its course” philosophy
- › Logical consequences—specific actions determined and enforced by the child's parents after a certain behavior has occurred

Principles for Using Consequences

Two main principles that will help make the discipline effective but not destructive are:

- › Consequences should not intimidate, hurt or embarrass
- › Discipline should maintain a safe environment where children learn rules, and also help them develop self-discipline and self-control

Common pitfalls of any type of discipline include:

- › Having a narrow focus
- › Unrealistic expectations
- › Ignoring the cause of behavior
- › “One-size-fits-all” discipline

Additional Information

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