

Health & Parenting

Parents, Kids, and Discipline

How can you provide discipline to your child so that he or she can function well at home and in public? Every parent wants their children to be happy, respectful, respected by others, and able to find their place in the world as well-behaved adults. Nobody wants to be accused of raising a spoiled brat.

But sometimes it seems that these goals are miles away from your child's current behavior. Read on for barriers to good behavior, effective discipline techniques, and when to get help for dangerous behavior patterns.

A Parent's Guide to Bedwetting

More than 5 million school-aged children wet the bed at night -- with twice as many boys wetting their bed as girls. Here's what you need to know to help your child deal with this common problem.

What Is Discipline?

Discipline is the process of teaching your child what type of behavior is acceptable and what type is not acceptable. In other words, discipline teaches a child to follow rules. Discipline may involve both punishment, such as a time out, and, more importantly, rewards. It sounds so straightforward, yet every parent becomes frustrated at one time or another with issues surrounding children and discipline.

Barriers to Good Behavior

Parents run up against several barriers when trying to teach good behavior to their children. How many of these have you experienced?

- Children who are disrespectful and don't listen: "I must have told you a thousand times!"
- Children who do listen, but defy or deliberately disobey your request for good behavior.

Accept the Challenge of Establishing Discipline

Your responsibility as a parent is to help your child become self-reliant, respectful, and self-controlled. Relatives, schools, churches, therapists, health care professionals, and others can help. But the primary responsibility for discipline rests with parents.

Continue reading below...

How do you proceed with this challenge? Take a look at your current parenting style and how you use discipline. The American Mental Health Association describes three styles of parenting:

- **An authoritative parent** has clear expectations and consequences and is affectionate toward his or her child. The authoritative parent allows for flexibility and collaborative problem solving with the child when dealing with behavioral challenges. This is the most effective form of parenting.
- **An authoritarian parent** has clear expectations and consequences, but shows little affection toward his or her child. The parent may say things like, "because I'm the Mommy, that's why." This is a less effective form of parenting.
- **A permissive parent** shows lots of affection toward his or her child but provides little discipline. This is a less effective form of parenting.

Choosing Discipline Techniques

The discipline techniques you choose may depend on the type of inappropriate behavior your child displays, your child's age, your child's temperament, and your parenting style. The following techniques are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the National Mental Health Association:

Reward good behavior

Acknowledging good behavior is the best way to encourage your child to continue it. In other words, "Catch him being good." Compliment your child when he or she shows the behavior you've been seeking.