Dad's Guide to Discipline

What is discipline?

Discipline is often thought of as punishing or correcting bad behavior. However, discipline is more about setting reasonable limits for your children and teaching them how to care for themselves and others. Here are some ideas for how to use discipline in your home:

Be consistent

- Respect their mother. Whether or not you are married, make sure your actions are consistent with hers.
- Make sure your own actions are regular. If your discipline is not consistent, you may confuse the child.

How to make rules

- Choose your rules carefully and only have a few. Make sure you always enforce those rules.
- Explain. If children understand why you chose those rules, they will be more likely to follow them.

How to use consequences

- Always tell the child what the consequence is: "If you don't pick up your toys, then you can't watch TV tonight." This way, the child has a choice – he can choose to pick up his toys, or to leave them on the floor and not watch TV.
- If your child misbehaves, enforce the consequence immediately. Otherwise he will not link his action with the consequence, and bad behavior may continue.
- When enforcing a consequence, link it to the problem behavior: "I am taking away your crayons because I asked you not to write on the wall." This will also help the child learn what they did wrong.

Build respect with your child

- Your child is not going to obey simply because "I am the dad and you are the child" – it's more complicated than that.
- Build a bond with your child. Without a bond, your child may not respect your rules and discipline.
- Children learn by example. Model the qualities you want to see in your children.

Tips for speaking to your children

- Praise good behavior. It can be as simple as "I'm so proud of you when you put your toys away!"
- Be firm and specific. "Eat with your fork, not with your hands" is better than "Stop being a pig."
- Don't lecture, ask questions. "How do you think Suzy feels when you push her in the park?"
- Play games. Instead of "Get ready to go outside" try "Let's see who can put on their coat first!"

Prevent Child Abuse
New York

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