



6 Steps

To solve discipline problems

1

Focus on one problem at a time

Choose one problem to focus on this month. Discipline is less effective when you try to deal with too many problems at the one time. Choose the problem that most de-energises you. When you solve one major problem, you often automatically solve others.

APPLICATION

My one major discipline problem is...

2

Define your outcomes

An outcome is what you want. When you focus on discipline outcomes, you become aware of the difference between how your child behaves, and how you want them to behave. Set your outcomes using the following sensory language:

If my child was behaving appropriately I would...

SEE

HEAR

FEEL

3

Setting limits with your child

Discipline works best when your child understands your expectations. A foggy expectation leads to misbehaviour. Your child should understand the rules (limits and expectations), and the consequence for breaking the rules before the misbehaviour occurs. Set limits in times of peace, not during misbehaviour.

Have a small number of rules – too many will confuse your child and exhaust you!

Rules should be fair

Rules should be easy to follow

Rules should be enforceable

Rules should be stated positively – describe what your child can do, rather than what they can't do

Have rules for particular situations – shopping, visiting friends, etc.

APPLICATION

Develop a setting limits plan for responding to your child's misbehaviour...

4

Think small

It's unrealistic to expect quick transformations in your child's behaviour. Misbehaviour often becomes a habit, and it takes time and persistence to break habits. When you see your child making small improvements be quick to acknowledge and encourage their progress. Measure your child's progress in small steps: minutes, number of times, etc.

APPLICATION

I must not expect perfection, but will encourage my child when I see small improvements.

5

Use positive and negative consequences

Having already established the consequences for misbehaviour, make sure you follow through with them when your child misbehaves. Remember, the purpose of the consequence is not to punish your child, but to have him or her behave in appropriate ways. Avoid only using negative consequences, like time-out, quiet time, logical consequences, etc. Positive attention is also a powerful technique for modifying your child's inappropriate behaviour. Children want to belong, and by meeting this need, you'll significantly lessen the desire to misbehave.

APPLICATION

Positive consequences (Affirmation, encouragement, support, reward)

Each time my child _____

I will _____

Negative consequences (Time-out, quiet time, logical consequences)

Each time my child _____


I will _____

6

Is it working?

Every parenting situation is unique, so no single discipline method works for every child! That's why there are so many parenting theories. Your child is unique: children think, feel, and act in different ways. Your discipline strategy may need to be adapted, or slightly modified, to fit your child's temperament.

Observe your child's response as you use a discipline technique. If the approach seems to be working, keep it up. If it's not working it could mean one of two



things: Firstly, it could mean you have the right approach, but your child is resisting the prospect of losing their power and control. So their misbehaviour increases. If you suspect this is the case, keep on with the discipline approach. Giving in will only increase the power struggle, resulting in more misbehaviour. But secondly, if it's obvious it is not working, try a new approach. A definition of insanity is doing more of the same thing, while expecting different results.

APPLICATION

What am I doing that's working?

What else do I need to do?

FURTHER READING:

The following ParentsPartner brochures will be helpful in implementing these six steps; Setting Limits, Ways to Discipline, Temperament, Back to Basics.

“Children are given to us - on loan - for a very short period of time. They come to us like a packet of flower seeds, with no pictures on the cover and no guarantees. We do not know what they will look like, act like, or have the potential to become. Our job, like the gardener's, is to meet their needs as best we can; to give proper nourishment, love, attention, and caring, and hope for the best.”

KATHERINE KERSEY

