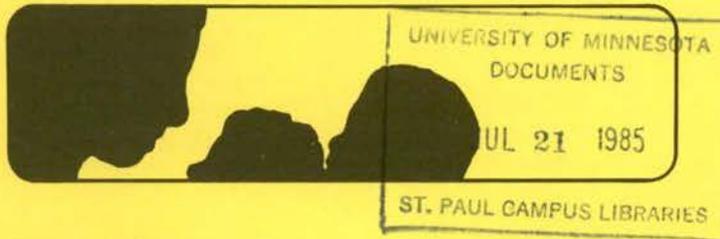


young families

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Discipline

Discipline is something you do for and with your children, not to them. The purpose of discipline is to help children learn what they should and should not do — for their own personal safety, to get along with others, and to develop as happy, competent, self-reliant individuals.

Eventually, we hope our children will grow up to be self-disciplined adults. But at first discipline must come from outside — from parents. It isn't easy, and it isn't quick. Effective discipline takes time, effort, and constant attention.

Young children need limits. They don't automatically know society's rules, and they need the help and guidance of parents and other adults. Without limits, every step a child takes is a blind move in unfamiliar or uncertain territory. The child will be confused, frightened, and unhappy.

But too many limits can also make a child unhappy, and may stifle the child's independence, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. Just how many limits should be made? Unfortunately, there is no one answer for all families. You can begin by setting limits on behavior that falls into a "restricted zone," such as when safety is in question. Provide a comfortable set of necessary ground rules, but leave space for children to make decisions for themselves and to learn how to set their own limits.

How you discipline your child is even more important than any rules you set up. Here are some guidelines.

- Give directions in a positive form. Sometimes it is necessary to say "don't" and "no," but it's equally important to tell children what they can do and to help them learn to handle the situation for themselves.
- Do not belittle the child. Remember it is the situation or the misbehavior you don't like, not the child. To blame, shame, or make children feel guilty can destroy their confidence and make them feel unworthy.
- Teach the correct behavior instead of criticizing wrong behavior. Show how you would like something done and explain the reasons for doing it that way.
- Change the environment when misbehavior occurs. Turning a child's attention toward an acceptable activity and away from what's unacceptable can help change behavior. If two children fight over a toy, you may need to put the toy away and give them two similar toys to play with. If you're taking a small child to a restaurant, bring along some quiet activities (puzzles, books, crayons and paper) to avoid restlessness.
- Offer choices only when there is a real alternative. You have to be willing to accept a child's decision. Questions such as "Don't you want to come in now?" or "Don't you want to eat your supper?" do not offer real choices. "Which

of these two dresses do you want to wear?" is a choice. "Put your trucks away now. Then choose a book you'd like me to read to you," tells a child what you want done but also offers a choice.

- Show your love and affection. The most effective step in guidance is helping your children know they are loved for themselves. A pat on the head, a smile, a hug, and "I love you" are constant reminders to children that they are important, worthwhile, and wanted.
- Set a good example. Remember that children learn by imitation, especially in the early, formative years. What types of example do parents, babysitters, relatives, day care providers, and teachers set for your children? Parents frequently complain that children won't put their toys away, keep their rooms clean, or do their homework. But have you helped or taught your little one to pick up toys, perhaps made a game of it? Do you pick up your clothes, keep your room reasonably clean? Do you read or study something as an example that homework is useful?

The most important element in disciplining a child is the atmosphere in the home. A loving, close-knit family may have moments of bickering, irritation, or anger, but generally they work things out together with friendliness and good feelings.

Ronald L. Pitzer
Extension Family Life Specialist



Summer Heat

Children's comfort, and health during the heat of summer can be somewhat assured if you provide additional baths, light nourishing food, careful exposure to full sunlight, and sufficient rest. On particularly hot days it helps to bathe an infant or young child twice a day, usually before a nap or in preparation for the night's sleep.

Youngsters want to be outside most of their waking hours, but they must be protected from overexposure to the hot sun as well as from overexertion. During the hottest part of the day, usually from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., encourage play in areas of partial shade. Quiet activities such as building with blocks, playing with puzzles, coloring, playing with clay, blowing bubbles, or playing in a shaded sandbox or kiddie pool, are recommended during these hottest and sunniest hours.

Of equal importance is the preparation of hot-weather menus for children. Although summer appetites may wane, children still need to eat sufficient protein foods as well as fruits and vegetables every day. Children may prefer to live on pop and snack foods for the duration of the summer, but they should be provided with a healthy diet.

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Dangerous Situations

As much as we try to protect our children, there are times when they may find themselves alone in a dangerous situation. Especially in the summer when youngsters spend so much time outside, constant supervision may not be feasible or even desirable. How can you warn your children about possible dangers without frightening them?

Teach Respect, Not Fear

One way is to focus on the idea of "respect" rather than fear. Although we usually think of respect as showing regard or esteem for someone, it also implies being aware of the potential danger or power of an object or person.

For example, children can be taught respect (not fear) for snakes, insects, wild animals, and unfamiliar domesticated animals. Since we cannot know how a wild or unfamiliar animal will behave, it is best to leave them alone while we admire them from a distance. The way we approach wild things influences their response to our presence. Creatures that bite or sting when alarmed are best left untouched. But they can be observed and studied from a distance.

Storm and Water Safety

A storm can be frightening unless children are helped to understand what it is and respect its power. Understanding thunder, lightning, wind, and cloud formations can make a storm less fearsome. Children need to know when to find shelter and where to find it when out of doors.

Children also need to be taught respect for water, not fear. Rules regarding swimming and other water play must be clearly established and carefully enforced — when, where, under what circumstances, and with whom.

Harmful People

One potential danger that parents sometimes find it hard to talk about to their children is sexual abuse. In a way, this, too, involves respect, but this time it is the child's respect for his or her own body. Explain to your children that their body belongs only to them alone and that they have the right to say no to anyone who might try to touch them.

Explain that some adults may try to hurt children or make them do things they don't feel comfortable doing. These adults may be strangers but they may also be acquaintances or relatives. Teach your child never to get into a car with a stranger or go anywhere with *anyone* without permission of a parent or caretaker. Urge your children to tell you of any such overtures made by anyone and to share their concerns and problems with you.

It is important to alert children to this danger, but try not to scare them. Emphasize that the vast majority of grownups do not want to hurt children and that most adults want to protect children from harm.

Ronald L. Pitzer
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Making Space for Baby

When making room for a new baby, try to create a space that is both functional and pleasant. Don't get carried away with too many ruffles, ribbons, and cute ideas, for they may soon lose their charm, especially if they require much upkeep.

A baby's furniture needs are simple: a crib, a storage space for diapers and clothing, and a place for changing diapers. As the child grows, you'll need storage and play space.

Safety is the most important consideration in adapting a space for a young child. Use child-resistant covers on electrical outlets. Screen wood-burning stoves and hot radiators to prevent burns. If windows are high above the ground, use vertical (not horizontal) grills to discourage climbing around the window. To avoid accidents at night, use a night light. Lights should be shaded to protect your child's eyes.

Cradles and cribs should be simple, functional, and safe. Antique or family cribs and cradles may be romantic, but they may be difficult to keep clean and can also be safety hazards. Be sure the baby's bed is stable, with a secure bottom. Use a firm, snug-fitting mattress, and avoid soft, loose, or clinging fabrics and linings. Do NOT put pillows in the crib.

The baby's changing table should be high enough so you can work without bending over, and have an area large enough to hold both clean and soiled clothing as well as a squirming baby.

Plan the room for a growing active child, not just for a little baby. Although a child-sized chair may be useful, generally avoid buying small-scale furniture that your child will quickly outgrow. Look for storage systems that can be adapted or added to.

Choose furniture finished with a durable, washable surface. Avoid rough-textured walls and floors — they're harder to clean. Use practical, hard-wearing wall coverings that can resist kicks, pricks, and crayon marks. Colors can affect a child's feelings. Bright colors, such as red, can be stimulating, whereas blue can be depressing. Wall decorations can create feelings of delight or fear in a young child.

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This Issue

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