

Positive Parenting Tips that Promote Good Behavior in Middle Childhood

NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Natural and logical consequences are effective in helping children see the connection between their actions and the results of their behavior. Natural consequences include the results of a child's actions without any adult interference. For example, the natural consequence of refusing to eat is hunger. Playing in rain puddles will result in wet socks and shoes.

Natural consequences are sometimes dangerous or impractical. For example, it would be dangerous for a child to experience the natural consequence of running into the street because the child might be hit by a car.

When natural consequences are unsafe for a child, you can use logical consequences to help the child correct behavior. Logical consequences require adult intervention. A logical consequence for an 8-year-old not studying for a test because he/she was talking on the phone with friends could be losing the privilege of talking to friends on the phone until grades improve.

The following examples also illustrate the use of logical consequences:

- ▶ Not cleaning up toys may result in the toys being taken away for a short period.
- ▶ Not being able to get up for school in the morning may result in an earlier bed time.
- ▶ Lying or other unacceptable behavior may result in a child writing an essay for the parent



Additional tips for positive, age-appropriate discipline:

- ▶ Interact with all children in a warm, accepting, yet firm manner at all times. When you talk with your child, get down on their level, kneel, sit or squat to their level or sit beside them on a bed, chair, etc. When you speak with them, use a gentle touch on their arm, shoulder or back, depending on the child and his/her comfort level with being touched.
- ▶ Since middle childhood brings about a better understanding of reasoning, parents may have to give more detailed explanations for expected behaviors. Be sure the child clearly understands the undesirable behavior. It is not enough to say, "Your room is messy." Messy should be specified in terms of exactly what is meant: "You've left dirty clothes on the floor, dirty plates on your desk, and your bed is not made."
- ▶ Children in middle childhood need to feel they have done a job well to build healthy self-confidence. Helping out at home gives school-age children a sense of belonging, mastery and confidence.
- ▶ Look for gradual changes in behavior and praise behavior that comes close to the desired goal. Don't expect your child to accomplish all your expectations at once.
- ▶ Reward desirable behavior frequently through the use of verbal praise, appropriate touch (pat on back) or something like a toy, the child's favorite food, family time (board game or movie with the family) or money.
- ▶ Remember that your behavior serves as a model for your children's behavior.

HERE'S HELP



Use the **Family Resources on pages 72–78** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.