

Parenting *ideas*

INSIGHTS

Building parent-school partnerships

Ten common discipline mistakes

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Here are 10 common and easily avoided mistakes parents make when disciplining their children. Replace these mistakes with better techniques and you'll be on your way to parenting easy street.

Discipline is easy when children are easy. It can be downright tricky when children are difficult, have interesting personalities or are at one of the challenging developmental stages.

It's with kids in these difficult categories that we need to get our discipline techniques right. Here are 10 common mistakes I see many parents make when trying to get cooperation from their children, keep them safe or teach them to behave well.

Do any of these bloopers ring a bell?

1 Repeating yourself

If you do this, you are training your kids to become 'parent deaf'. Kids learn more from respectful actions than your repeated words, so speak once – twice at most – then DO something.

2 Shouting to be heard

You will get better results by going below the noise baseline to get their attention rather than raising your voice.

3 Setting limits too late

If you set a limit a few weeks after new object or situation is introduced (e.g. a kid gets a new mobile phone, a teen starts going out at night), you will be seen to be taking away a freedom. It's better to set limits first then loosen them up later.

4 Setting no limits

Boundaries, rules, expectations and standards teach kids what's expected. Boys love them. They also like to push against them, so you need a firm backbone.

5 Failing to follow through.

Talk! Threaten! Nag! No way! See No. 1 above.

6 Making consequences too harsh

"You're grounded for a month, Mr 6-year-old" is a tad harsh and will usually bring resentment, not to mention confusion. Stick to the 3 Rs – respectful, reasonable and related to the behaviour – when setting consequences and you can't go too far wrong.

7 Applying consequences when you, or they, are angry

When anger is in the air kids will become mad at you ... if they listen at all. Calmness makes a huge difference to effectiveness at the point of discipline.

8 Mixing discipline with counselling

Never mix the two as it sends mixed messages. If a child misbehaves manage that situation. If you suspect something negative is going on in their life, then deal with that at a separate time.

Keep the two actions separate so they can both be effective.

9 Deferring discipline

Deferring discipline to a child care centre, preschool or school. This is taking the easy way out and teaches kids that you don't have real authority. Have the confidence to be the authority and take a lead.

10 One parent is always the bad guy

This gets wearing. Also it's hard to have fun when you are the tough cop all the time. If you are in a two-parent situation take discipline in turns. If you are parenting solo, bring spares into the act.

We've all made mistakes when disciplining kids. Tiredness, emotion and lack of skill can get in the way of effective discipline. But part of the evolution and growth of you as a parent involves eradicating some of your old ways, and replacing them with new, more effective, more sophisticated ways of managing yourself and your kids.

For better, more sophisticated and more effective discipline techniques visit my online parenting manual – the Parentingideas Club. There are 1,000s of strategies waiting to be used. Take your FREE trial now at parentingideasclub.com.au

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