

# Appropriate Discipline for Children:

Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers



Child Care Training and Resource Kit - Appropriate Discipline for Children - Overhead

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You have a responsibility to the children in your care. You want them to grow up to be happy, secure, self-motivated and successful adults. And you contribute heavily to that process because they are in your care for long periods of time.

Yet, when you have 18 children in your care all at once, it can be very difficult to be consistent and to continually communicate unconditional love. But you are wonderful people and you can do this.

Let's look now at the objectives for this class.



## Objectives

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- To learn how developmental stages influence behavior.
- To learn what role temperament plays in behavior.
- To reflect on our personal experiences with discipline.
- To learn steps of effective limit setting in a child care setting.


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Review each of the objectives and have them begin discussion on whether or not they agree or disagree with these points. Do they agree that development influences behavior? Do they agree that children have different temperaments and this influences their behavior?

Then take some time for them to share their own experiences with discipline.

# Infants



- 0-3 months: No discipline
- 4-7 months: Distraction and redirection
- 8-12 months: Distraction and redirection with consistency and immediacy

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Let's start at the beginning of life.

Are you going to be doing any discipline on infants from birth to 4 months? I would hope not. Are they able at that age to connect cause and effect? Their brains are working on it, but it is not time for discipline. (Discuss what is going on developmentally for this child and why discipline is not what he needs.)

What about from 4-7 months of age? Not much discipline goes on, but if the baby is pulling your hair, what could you do? Say, "no" and redirect his attention. (Discuss what is going on developmentally for this child and why this type of discipline is what he needs.)

What about the 8-12 month old? When they are continually going into the garbage, say "no" and redirect immediately. They still need distraction and redirection, and it needs to be consistent and immediate. They don't need anger. They just need you to always say no to the same things at the same time and in the same way. They'll get it, sooner or later, that that is a no, no. (Discuss what is going on developmentally for this child and why this type of discipline is what he needs. Also discuss temperaments and how that will affect their choice of discipline.)

## Toddlers

- Independence: Choice
- Exploration: Modify the Environment
- Temper tantrums: Eliminate the audience
- Negativism: Choice



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(Discuss what is going on developmentally with toddlers. Also discuss temperaments and how that will affect their choice of discipline.)

So what can you do for their independence seeking behavior? Offer choices

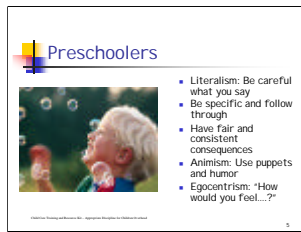
What about their need to explore? Modify the environment. Make a place where they can explore. Rather than have an environment where everything is no, make it a place where everything is yes.

What about temper tantrums? Eliminate the audience, protect the child, and if possible, avoid those situations where temper tantrums occur.

What about their need to say no, their negativism? Don't take it personally, offer them choices that are not yes/no but that are open ended, and offer choices. There isn't much that a little guy can control in his life. Give him as much choice as you can.

Make sure the consequences you offer up are logical and consistent. They need consistency in their lives!

Have routines and rituals. Children of this age feel much more secure when they know what is going to be happening when.



(Discuss what goes on developmentally with preschoolers. Also discuss temperaments and how that will affect their choice of discipline.)

So what do you do with their literalism? You are careful what you say.

•You would never say, “I’m so angry I could just shoot you.” or “If you are going to be that rowdy, why don’t you just play in traffic?” Because they would take you very literally.

•You need to be very specific.

•Don’t say: “It would be nice if...”

•Don’t make an incomplete request: “Get ready to go.”

•Don’t be vague: “You know better...”

•Instead, be clear and specific. State your requests in a way that will not be misunderstood or ignored. “Please put your shoes and coat on and get in the playground.” Or, “Use a quiet inside voice.”

•And follow through. Don’t say that it’s time to go, and then chat for 20 more minutes. Don’t ask them to clean up the toys they have been playing with and then let the mess sit through lunch. Make sure that what you want them to do is something that you are willing to follow through on. And then always follow through.

•And when you ask them to do something, and they don’t, make sure the consequences are logical, related to the incident and fair. Let’s brainstorm some “fair” consequences. (Make a list.)

What are some natural consequences that would be okay? (Make a list)


What about their animistic characteristics? (all things, animate and inanimate, can understand them and talk to them)

•It’s actually helpful to you as teacher because you can have puppets talking to them about behavior issues. The puppets or the stuffed animals can give them advice.

•And use some humor. Make a joke, sing a song.

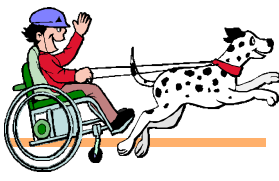
And what about their egocentrism? How can you use that to your benefit? You can say, “How would you feel...?” Help them to begin to learn to translate what they are feeling into it’s affect on their actions.

It’s important to remember, with all age children that you are dealing, to control your emotions. Children don’t pay closer attention when you are yelling. In fact, they focus on your anger and totally don’t hear what you are saying with your words. So keep your voice even and calm, and your words clear and specific. And get up close and personal. Children will respond much, much better to a parent who is facing them eye-to-eye.



## School Age (5-12)

- Communication
- Promote Independence and Problem Solving Skills
- Unconditional love and acceptance
- No rewards or punishments



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(Discuss what goes on developmentally in these years. Also discuss temperaments and how that will affect their choice of discipline.)

Communication is important in this age group. They don't need to hear you say "don't". That conveys a command.

- You want them to hear what you want them to do.
- You want to communicate to them your desire to have a relationship with them.
- You want them to learn about your expectations in the classroom.
- They need to hear you say what it is you want them to do.
- They need to hear it clearly and succinctly. Examples are: "I want you to do this." or "When you do this, then this will happen."

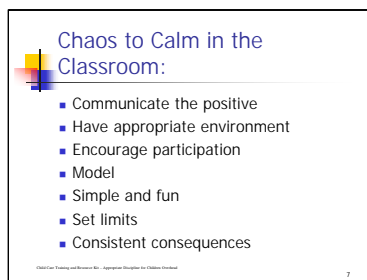
Often, they can't process the why question. Often they will misbehave, and have no clue as to why they did it. Remember that they are still working on impulse control. So, don't ask, "Why did you do that." Instead say, "I need you to behave like this" or "I need this to be done." Once again, you are telling them what you want them to do. You are focusing on the positive.

It's important that you let them be who they are. Don't compare them to their classmates. That hurts their self-esteem. Simply state what you want to see happen. And find something that he does right, no matter how trivial it may be.

Don't over-explain. Don't lecture. The more you talk, the less chance the child has to develop her own thoughts. The more she talks, the more she has to think. And the more she has to think, the more she learns about her world. Give them ownership of their world.

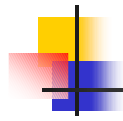
Don't tune-out. If he comes to you with a problem, don't focus on the problem and scold him for doing it. Focus instead on how he feels and help him to try and learn more from the situation. Try to help him solve the situation. He needs to feel that he isn't alone and that he can count on your support, no matter what the issue. If he knows that you will really listen, this will lay the foundation for helping him to avoid drugs and violence later in life. Communicate unconditional love to him.

Avoid rewards and punishments. Teach them to do what is right because it's right, not because they are going to get something for it.



We all know how difficult it is to keep things calm in a classroom with 18 children! But let's talk about how to make it work.

- Start off with communicating the positive. Try to deliver only positive and reinforcing messages.
- Set up the environment to be a “yes” space instead of a “no” space.
- Encourage participation in everything. Teach the children to touch and feel and be involved in their class.
- Keep in close touch with the children. Know what they are thinking and feeling.
- Model for them acceptable behavior. If you want them to say “please” and “thank you” then you say “please” and “thank you”. If you want them to not yell, don't you yell.
- Keep programs simple and fun. Children need much less stimulation and complicated activities than their teachers do. And simple and fun activities engage the mind more, and make calm more easily achieved.
- Set limits and expect them to be met. Use natural consequences, when they apply, and logical consequences that are consistently instituted.
- Plan ahead for those transition times. Because this is when much disruptive behavior occurs, there are some special guidelines.
  1. Have an established procedure and follow it consistently. When the routine is established, give them warnings about when a change in activity is about to occur. “It's two minutes to time to clean up.”
  2. Avoid having children wait in line for anything. Have a few children go through to wash hands or go to the bathroom while the rest are occupied. Children this age aren't made to be still and in line.
  3. Plan staff time so that there is plenty of staff during transitional periods.
  4. Allow plenty of time. Transition requires careful planning and a relaxed pace. Rushing to get from one thing to the next produces tensions and defeats the whole purpose of allowing the child greater independence and a large role in caring for his own needs and contributing to his world away from home.
  5. Be clear in explaining expectations. And always anticipate the next situation and prepare for it.
  6. Follow the same schedule each day. Be consistent!
    - Have simple classroom rules
    - Reduce waiting time
    - Offer many choices and a variety of toys and activities



## Questions to ask yourself:

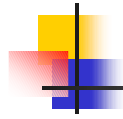
- Do I know what I want to say and do I take the time to say it?
- Do I say it every time I need to say it?
- Do I really let them talk and do I really listen?
- Do I take the time to explain and do I use examples?

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When things aren't going as you have planned, stop and take some time and ask yourself these questions about your planning for the day.

Go through each question and discuss how it would help them in the planning of the day and getting rid of the chaos.



## Questions to ask yourself:

- Do I let them show me they understand?
- Do I let them know when “they have got it?”
- Do I take advantage of “teachable moments”?
- Do I allow “natural” consequences to happen?

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Go through each question and discuss how it would help them in the planning of the day and getting rid of the chaos.

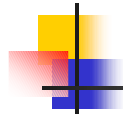


## Questions to ask yourself:

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- Do I go over the classroom rules frequently?
- Do I use words to describe feelings?

Go through each question and discuss how it would help them in the planning of the day and getting rid of the chaos.




## Ideas for the classroom:

- Have children help set-up the rules.
- Review rules every week.
- Discuss consequences.
- Describe feelings.
- Role play or use puppets to tell stories.
- Practice positive reinforcement.
- Keep classroom relaxed and slow.

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Review the slide and why each of these things would help with chaos and discipline issues in the classroom.



Punishment	Discipline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ An unpleasant consequence for doing or not doing something.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ A method of guiding children that helps them learn how to control their own behavior.</li></ul>

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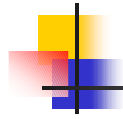
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Discuss the differences between punishment and discipline.

**Punishment:** read slide. The purpose of punishment is to decrease the likelihood that bad behavior will occur again. The outcome is that effective punishment results in kids learning what behavior their parents consider unacceptable and leads to a decrease in that behavior.

**Discipline:** read slide. The purpose of discipline is to help children learn to make good decisions on their own. The outcomes then, of effective discipline, results in children feeling secure, responsible, deserving and loved; confident in their ability to make good decisions and able to maintain caring relationships with others.

Discuss both and why one is preferred over the other.



## When to seek help:

- Prolonged adjustment to child care or problems separating from parents.
- Injured other children or adults.
- Destroyed property.
- Difficulty relating to other children or adults.
- Difficulty attending or focusing.

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There will be times when you have tried everything. You've changed the classroom environment, you've worked on your transitions, you've done role play, you are doing positive reinforcement...and still you have a child in class whose difficulties are severe and disruptive. Let's look at the guidelines for seeking outside resources. These are not hard and fast rules, but should serve as a guide for you.

Discuss each one, it's classroom impact and what it could be reflecting in the child and why participants could use outside resources.



## When to seek help:

- Signs of depression (withdraws, appears sad, self-abusive).
- Behavior is repeatedly a problem and usual discipline methods fail.
- Unusual family stresses: traumatic divorce, death, violence, substance abuse.

Continue with a discussion of each one, it's classroom impact and what it could be reflecting in the child and why participants could use outside resources.



## When to seek help:

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- Caregiver or teacher often feels frustrated or ineffective in meeting the child's needs.

Continue with a discussion of each one, it's classroom impact and what it could be reflecting in the child and why participants could use outside resources. This one is particularly important for the child care to pay attention to.