

S.K.I.P

The Six Principles of Effective Discipline

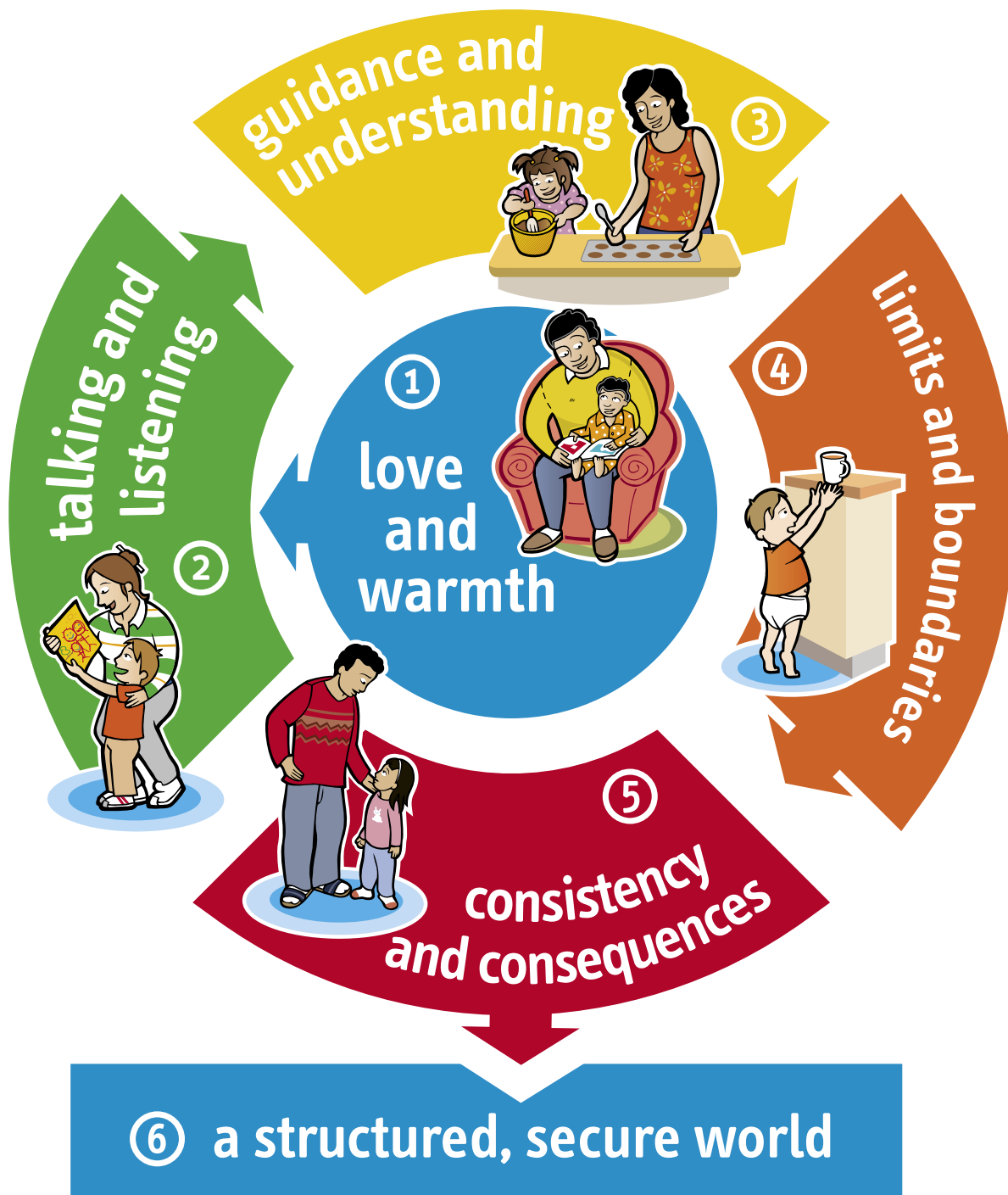
A RESOURCE FOR SUPPORTERS OF PARENTS

Module Three





Six things children need to grow up to be happy, capable adults



Module Three: This is one of a series of SKIP modules which introduce supporters of parents and caregivers to key findings from recent research on parenting practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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Introduction to SKIP

VISION

All children in New Zealand are raised in a positive way, with parents and caregivers who feel confident about managing children's behaviour as part of a loving, nurturing relationship.

VALUES

SKIP will:

- be positive and non-judgmental
- affirm parents and caregivers' expertise and experience
- be sensitive to the complexity and stress of family life
- emphasise links between child development and behaviour
- focus on the whole child, including where they live, who they live with and their environment.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the opportunities for communities to provide positive parenting.
- Increase the consistency and application of knowledge about effective non-physical discipline within organisations working with parents, caregivers and children.
- Increase the number of parents and caregivers who are confident, skilled and knowledgeable about using effective non-physical discipline.

SKIP supports parents and caregivers to raise children in a positive way, using effective non-physical discipline that includes love and nurture and limits and boundaries.

SKIP is doing this in three ways:

- By supporting local community groups to promote positive parenting through a Local Initiatives Fund.
- By working with national organisations to build capacity to support parents and caregivers.
- Through developing national resources for parents and caregivers and the organisations working with them.



Introduction to SKIP Modules

Components



Research says...



Reflective questions



Tips for exercises



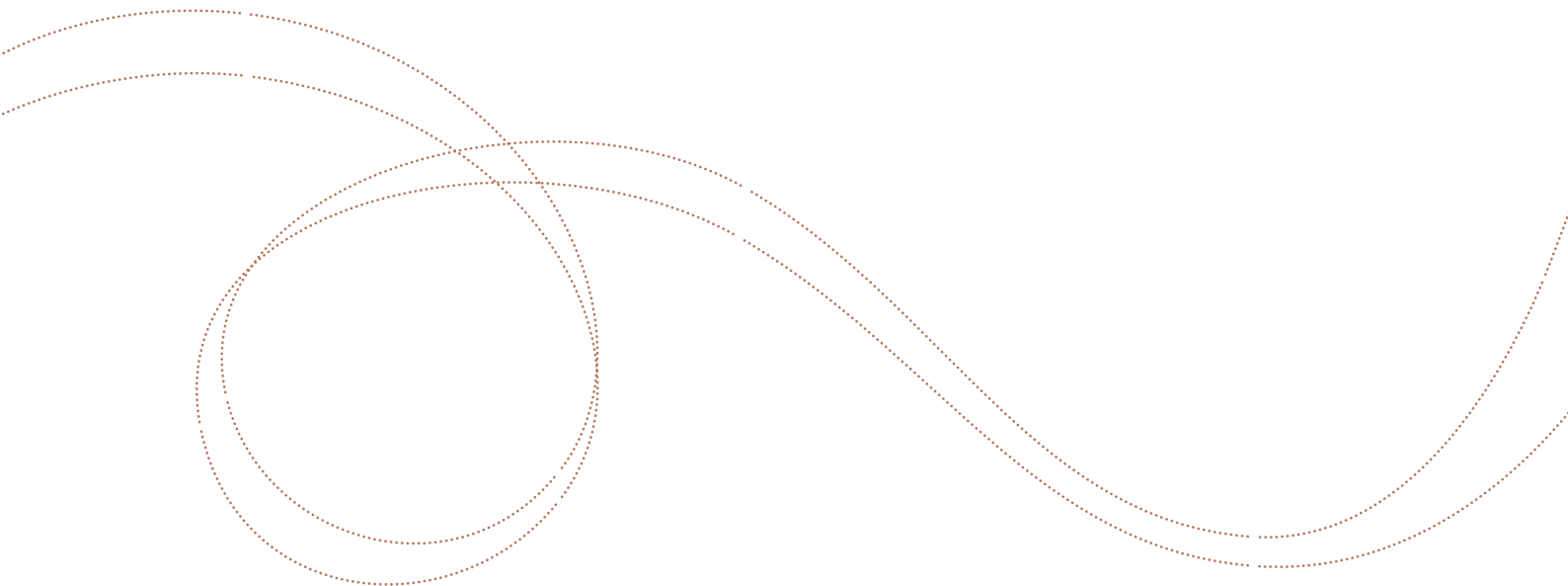
Resources

The SKIP modules have been developed for organisations supporting parents and caregivers.

This module is split into several sections so it can be used in a number of ways. For example:

- it can form the basis of staff training
- it can be used to inform or train parents
- it can be used alongside the SKIP parent pamphlets
- sections can be used as handouts in existing training programmes
- it can be used to develop local resources.

Thanks to Lisa McKimm for her work on this module.



Overview of the Six Principles of Effective Discipline

In 2004 the Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago and the Office of the Children's Commissioner published a research report "The Discipline and Guidance of Children".

The research revealed six key principles of Effective Discipline.



PRINCIPLE ONE:

Love and Warmth

This is required from the very beginning of life as it helps build the bonds of trust and love, and positive self-esteem. It is also a way for parents to invest in their relationship, and makes respectful discipline easier and more effective.

Reflective questions

How do you feel when people you work with are friendly and are interested in your work?

It's the same in families.

PRINCIPLE TWO:

Talking and Listening

Talking with children, listening to what they say and giving clear messages suitable to their age creates good outcomes. Expectations cannot be lectured into or shouted at children. Their fear, and the need to defend themselves, will overpower their ability (and willingness) to listen.

Reflective questions

- 1 How do you feel when someone lectures you?
- 2 What do you learn from being lectured?
- 3 If someone is angry with you, how do you react?

It's the same for families.



PRINCIPLE THREE:

Guidance and Understanding

Children are more likely to co-operate when they understand why we require things from them. Straightforward respectful explanations inspire greater co-operation than methods such as guilt-trips.

Reflective
questions

- 1 How do you feel in a new situation when someone takes time to explain what is expected of you?
- 2 How do you feel when this does not happen?

PRINCIPLE FOUR:

Limits and Boundaries

Rules keep things fair and safe for everyone in the family. Rules need to teach mostly 'what we do' rather than 'what we don't do'. For families with a greater level of need for support, the clearer the rules are for their children, the more successful the outcomes. But remember – rules need to work for everyone – not just the parents.

Reflective
questions

How would you feel in a new situation where you are only told what not to do?



PRINCIPLE FIVE:

Consistency and Consequences

Consistency involves predictability. Children connect an action with a consequence from an early age. When consequences are applied there is real learning – without suffering. Relationships can also stay intact. The 3 Rs of creating consequences successfully are to make things Related, Reasonable, Respectful. Parents need to apply all three if they are to experience success and satisfaction. This method teaches children to “put things right”.

Reflective questions

How would it impact on you if every time you talk to your boss, s/he treats you differently, no matter how you behave?

PRINCIPLE SIX:

A Structured and Secure World

This involves two things:

- planning ahead to avoid predictable difficulties by, for instance, putting breakable objects out of reach of two-year-olds; and
- monitoring your own behaviour – children will copy your behaviour – this is called modelling – a major learning tool.

Reflective questions

How do you feel when someone expects you to treat them in a different way to how they treat you?

Resource

Have a look at SKIP's 'Children's Voices' DVD or video. Young children tell us what they like and don't like about their relationships with adults.

PRINCIPLE ONE: Love and Warmth

Treating children with warmth and being involved in their lives sounds simple. All we have to do is:

- be warm and loving
- give lots of praise
- say lots more positive things than negative things – try a ratio of six to eight positive interactions or comments to every negative.

But how do we do it? In this section, we look at the essentials – relationships, respect and love and encouragement.



Tips for exercises

Working with parents and caregivers

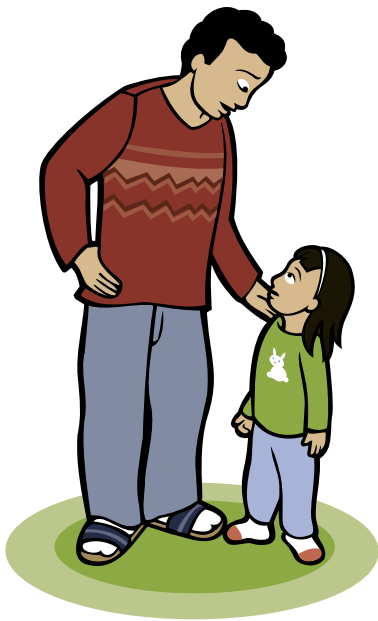
Put 10 coins in one pocket at the start of the day. Every time you say something positive to your child or children transfer one coin to the opposite pocket. Make sure all coins have been transferred at the end of the day.



Research says...

'If children have warm, trusting, responsive and reciprocal relationships with their caregivers they are likely to develop internal controls on behaviour, and learn what their caregivers want to teach them. If children experience criticism, lack of acceptance, and feel unloved they are likely to become defiant and aggressive.'

Children's Issues Centre 2004



Relationships

The secrets of happy relationships include:

- taking time for fun
- showing love
- encouraging each other
- mutual respect.

We need to ask ourselves:

- What things do we do to create fun memories?
- How can we prioritise spending time doing this?
- What are the things that we do or say to encourage each other? (e.g. notice efforts and improvements; send You Can Do It messages; focus on the positive, not the negative).
- How do we show each other respect?
- How do children know that they are cared about and loved?

The more ways we can find to do these things, the better our relationships will be.

Building great relationships to make an unforgettable legacy

If parents wore a name tag that described the job of parents, it would say **“MEMORY MAKER”**. If we aim to make as many good memories as we possibly can, then one day our children will be tucking their own children into bed and telling them stories about “When I was little...”



What kinds of things do parents want their future grandchildren or mokopuna to hear about them?



Working with parents and caregivers

It could be a good idea for the parents that you work with to jot a few of these down. Maybe they will want their children to say that there was lots of laughter and understanding.

Or

That they were loving and patient and brought an air of peace to the way they handled things.

The list can then be stuck on to their fridge (with a SKIP magnet.). They can then look at this if they feel their edges fraying or a bit of a melt down coming on and ask themselves, "Is what I'm about to do taking me towards my goals for memory making – or away from them?"

Putting it into practice

For you at home

Sit down somewhere peaceful and list the ways you believe parents may want to be remembered. How would you like to be able to remember your own parents? If you have children, gather up their thoughts and add them to your list. Kids are often a fabulous goldmine of ideas for this activity. If you have children, use a SKIP magnet ("Try to think of it as a short time in their lives when they need you a lot" would be great one.) to attach your list to the fridge. Look at it often. Be inspired by it. Let it be your compass for the way you live.

For your workplace team

Brainstorm a list with your workmates – "In this workplace we value..."

For example, supporting each other; friendly voices; non-critical or non-judgmental feedback; helpfulness; respect for who we are as people as well as workers; patient instruction while we're learning; realistic and fair expectations.

Place this list in a prominent place and ask everyone to take responsibility for following it to the best of their ability.

For the families you work alongside

Now that you have had some practice at putting this to work you will be able to see the value in it – share this with the families you work with. Help them to create their own list. Be very encouraging about their ideas. Let them know they can add or change the list if new ideas come to them.

If they are struggling to come up with ideas – rather than supply answers – see if they can think of a family that they admire – either someone they know or even a family on TV. Ask them what it is about this family that they like. This strength based approach allows the answers to be inspired by their own hearts and increases their ownership of them.

Respect

Read this true story.

Netty was eleven years old, and went to a small rural New Zealand school. As anyone knows who's had kids at school – teachers are people who put their heart and soul into their work. But Netty's teacher didn't seem to be doing so well. One day in a fit of frustration and anger he threw a shoe across the room, and it hit a little girl called Sal in the back of the head.

Well, the class went silent. The only sound was of Sal's crying. She was in shock, and so were the rest of the class. The teacher went over to check Sal out.

Netty began to pile up her books from her desk. Her friend didn't know what she was doing – but decided that whatever it was – she was doing it too. The teacher turned around to see both of them leaving the room. "Where do you think you're going?" he asked.

"My Mum wouldn't want me in a class with a teacher that didn't show respect to children" said Netty quietly as she left the room.

They knocked on Miss Branson's classroom door – "Can we have a desk to sit and work at please?" Miss Branson might have thought these students had been misbehaving and sent out of their classroom – "OK girls, settle down over here". It wasn't many minutes until their teacher came looking for them. "Girls – back to the class now" he said firmly.

continued over the page...

As Netty walked back with her friend she resolutely whispered to her "I'm going to stay behind after school and talk to him!" Netty's friend thought that this seemed a very brave thing to do. The bell rang at 3.00 pm. The children left. All except Netty. She approached her teacher purposefully, "Can I talk to you?"

"What is it Netty?" he replied in clipped tones.

"You have rules about how loud the kids in the class are allowed to be, but you seem to shout at us a lot of the time. And that's a double standard."

"Well, Netty – there are children in this class that push the limits too much, and make me shout sometimes".

"My Mum always says nobody makes us do anything – we always have a choice" she earnestly replied. And sensing that was all she was going to get from her teacher, she simply said "OK, I'm going home now" - and went.

There were a number of things that stood out to Netty's mum when she heard about all of this.

- She realised how important it is for children to know what respect should look like and feel like.
- She realised that she had never lectured her children about respect (lectures are rarely respectful).
- Learning about respect had set her daughter up with a compass (direction-finder) for life. She would choose friends, partners, bosses or employees who treated her with respect. If they didn't, she would speak up respectfully and confidently in a skilled way, and try to change things. If she couldn't make it work, she would not stay in a relationship or environment where she was not respected.
- Her internal compass would also ensure that she directed the behaviour that she wanted to receive out towards others. She had learnt the importance of mutual respect.

"Parents must learn to give their children sensational respect"

Natasha de Jong – four-years-old

What kids think about respect

This is what children say about the way they would like to be treated by their parents:

- Talk to us softly and nicely.
- Don't get too angry.
- Speak to us nicely so we can speak to them nicely.
- Be friendly.
- Use a happy voice.
- Tell us the right things to do.
- Help me if I'm feeling cross.
- Give me good choices – then let me choose one.
- Kiss and cuddle me when I'm upset.
- Leave me alone to think when I need it.
- Don't talk to me really loudly when I'm upset.
- Comfort me.
- Help me to have a good heart.

Resource

SKIP DVD/video – Children's Voices.

Children know a lot more about respect than we give them credit for. They are a great source of inspiration when working on the “putting it into practice” activities.





Love

There are many ways to show love. Parents and caregivers show love to their children:

- by doing kind and thoughtful things for them
- by tending their accidents gently
- by keeping them safe from harm
- by hugs, cuddles and kisses
- by creating little surprises
- by giving them their full attention regularly
- by saying encouraging things to them
- by laughing together.

The answer that children give most often when asked “How do you know that Mum (or Dad, or other family member) loves you?” is “Because they do fun things with me.” (The things might be chasing, swimming, hide and seek, rolling around together, building huts, cultural activities, picnics, cooking ...the list is endless.)

The art of encouragement

Read this story.

Looking Through The Eyes of Benjamin West’s Mother

Once upon a time there was a young boy named Benjamin West. He lived in America and grew up to be a renowned and influential artist.

When he was a young boy, his mother needed to fetch some groceries, and left Benjamin minding his younger sister Sally. Whilst his mother was busy at the markets, young Benjamin discovered several bottles of ink and decided to paint a picture of his sister. Stray brush marks, and splotted furniture prevailed.

But when his mother returned, she looked past all of this – she looked over his shoulder and said warmly “Why – you’ve painted Sally!” She then leaned down and kissed her son on the cheek.

Throughout the rest of his life Benjamin West told of this special memory and turning point, “My Mother’s kiss made me an artist” How easy would it have been to have shrieked about the mess?

How tempting it might have been to launch into a lecture of “If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times Benjamin, . . . are your ears painted on?” But she didn’t. And we’ll never know if she was tempted. The story is over 100 years old. What we do know is that she had the patience and wisdom to encourage her child in his efforts.

Whilst there probably was a conversation afterwards about how the clean up would be done – she chose to begin by placing the focus on the positive rather than the negative!

As we focus on what is good about people, we enable them to achieve it. Benjamin West became one of the most influential American artists of his time. Respect involves building kids up, instead of knocking them down.

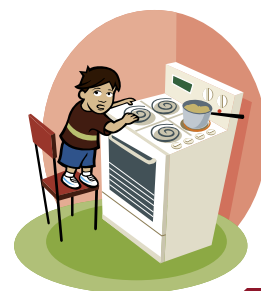
When your four year old writes a word on your book or a two year old plays with the switch on the stereo, show appreciation of their learning process and suggest a different way of learning – one that does not ruin your things!

It is also important to resist defending our actions with negative comments like “We’ll never get anywhere if I don’t stick the occasional bomb underneath him”, or “He has to learn, it’s for his own good”.

As Gran used to say – You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar! A few kind and encouraging words can be more of a bomb underneath us than harsh or disapproving ones. How do YOU like to be treated when you are learning something new?

“A child needs encouragement like a plant needs water”

Rudolf Dreikurs



Putting it into practice

For you at home

Think of a comment or a reaction that helped you recognize your own abilities or built your confidence. If you have children, do you want them to be able to recall times when you handled things so positively that it transformed things? You may already be fabulous at this, but most of us can always find ways to fine tune what we say and do.

How can you fine tune what you do towards everyone you live with?
Make a list. See if others in your home would like to do the same. It's OK if they don't – make a start anyway!

Use a SKIP Magnet to put your work onto the fridge – there's one that was tailor-made for this: "Try to say lots more positive things than negative things"

For your workplace team

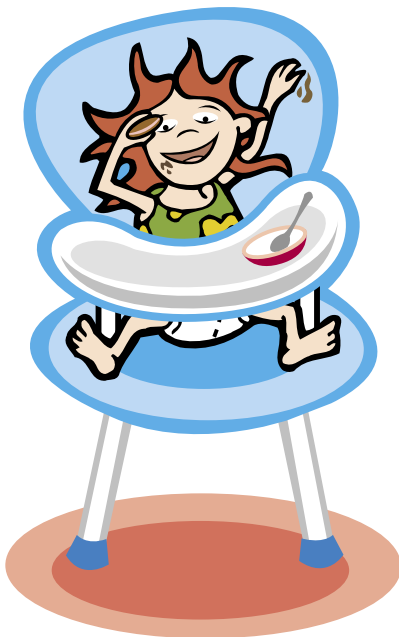
Discuss at work how you can be encouraging and respectful

- of yourselves
- of each other
- of the families that you work with
- of other agencies or departments that you work with.

Make a commitment to it and keep evaluating your progress.

For the families you work alongside

Mrs West knew all about strength based practices before the term was invented! Encourage the families that you work with to fine tune their relationships. Talk about the benefits that you received from it. Look for "encouragable moments" at all times when talking with families – if you can't see them – look even harder! They are always present.



PRINCIPLE TWO: Talking and Listening

Children learn about others through everyday conversations. When we discipline children, we need to ensure they understand the message. We also need to say it in a way that is not vague, confusing or hostile. These types of messages raise negative feelings that distract the child from what you are trying to tell them.

Research says...

Disciplinary encounters are a form of teaching – they are how a child learns about the perspectives of others. What parents say to children when they discipline them will influence how effective the discipline is. To be effective the message needs to be

- clear
- sensible
- age appropriate.

How to be clear:

- attract the child's attention
- direct their attention to the object or topic under question
- give a specific explanation about what is expected and why.

Our expectations need to be reasonable – a one year old is going to make a mess when eating and a two year old will have toilet accidents.

See SKIP's Child Development and Behaviour module for more detail about children's development.

Research says...

A family climate in which children's perspectives are listened to, respected and considered, and where children feel that they can state their own point of view without anxiety, is likely to be the most favourable for effective communication.

Childrens Issues Centre



Parenting styles and communication

There are many great ways to parent children – and each family needs to find ways that fit with their values and beliefs.

Let's take a look at communication patterns in two well-intentioned parenting styles that ultimately can create some big problems.



Resource

See the module “Conscious Parenting” for a detailed description of parenting styles and for information on helping parents to identify their own style.

Authoritarian

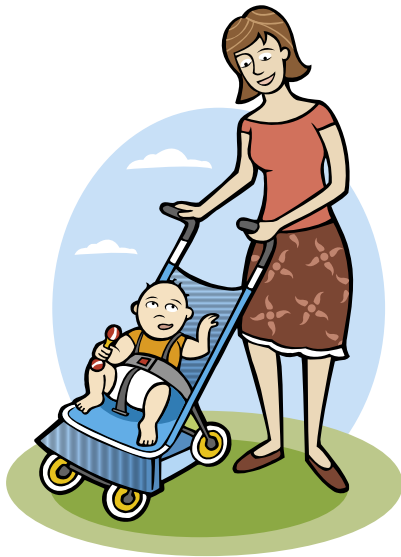
This style is characterized by the message “I’m the boss, and I know what’s good for you!”

To get children to behave in ways that they want, an authoritarian set of communication tools is often used.

These may include:

- shouting
- nagging
- threatening
- impatience
- criticising
- shaming
- comparing to others
- giving orders
- hitting (or smacking as parents mostly call it).

Are these the goals that parents have stuck to the fridge about raising their children?



Permissive

This style gives the message “Oh well – they’re only kids once – besides I’m really tired of asking, it’s easier just to do it myself

Communication tools used may include:

- giving in
- never saying No
- inconsistent with limits
- making empty threats
- nagging
- being a doormat
- giving up.

Are these the goals that parents have stuck to the fridge about raising their children?

Authoritative

The parenting style that research shows produces healthy, well balanced children gives children the message “You are a real person and so am I – let’s find ways for both of us to enjoy our lives.”

Parents using this style use a set of communication tools that include:

- listening
- considering
- responding
- explaining
- positive enforcement
- encouragement
- more positive than negative messages.

Research shows that this set of tools produces children who are self motivated, who have developed internal discipline, who communicate clearly, and who have good self esteem. These are also children who respect others.



Putting it into practice

For you at home

Take some time to think about how you communicate with children. Think about how it differs from the ways you communicate with adults. How effective is your style? What would you like to change? Select something you would like to change and work on it for a week. You will be rewarded for your efforts!

Next, think about how you communicate when you are:

- under stress
- frightened, for example, by your child doing something dangerous
- angry
- happy.

Select one situation and work out how you could handle it more effectively next time.

For your workplace team

What is the dominant style of communication in your workplace? How do you feel about this? What can you do to contribute to improving communication at work?

For the families you work alongside

Share what you have learned about yourself and your family/household whilst doing the activity above. Encourage reflection back to the home that they grew up in. What do they want to keep and what do they want to change in how they communicate with their children?

Make a list of what they want to have in their communication toolbox at their house now. This can be put on the fridge with a SKIP magnet.

A circular logo with a dark red background and a white border. The text "Tips for" is in a small, white, sans-serif font, and "exercises" is in a larger, white, sans-serif font below it.

Working with parents and caregivers

If running a workshop with parents or those supporting parents, try this communication game. Without any notice tell the group to do the following:

- Don't sit down.
- Don't stand up.
- Don't put your arms by your side.
- Don't raise them above your head.
- Don't open your eyes.

Ask people to share their experiences with the group and relate this to children's experience of being told what to do.

PRINCIPLE THREE: Guidance and Understanding

Explanations tell children what, why, or how; induction takes an explanation a step further and leads to longer-term changes.

Induction involves

- reasoning
- explaining
- setting up natural and logical consequences
- limit setting.

Induction helps children see the effect of their actions on others.



Inductive methods are preferable – reasoning, explanation, consequences and limit setting sensitise children to the negative effect of their behaviour on others.

Power-assertive methods – those which emphasise obedience and compliance – are less effective. They sometimes work immediately but are more likely to have poor long term outcomes.

So how do we use explanations and induction?

- We talk to children about how their behaviour affects others.
- We give brief reasons for our requests.

Let's look at how different people react to a three-year-old grabbing a toy off another child.

The authoritarian parent is likely to

- take the toy off the child
- tell the child off – 'that's naughty'
- punish the child by smacking or withdrawal of affection.

A permissive parent is likely to

- do nothing
- allow the child to keep the toy.



An authoritative parent is likely to

- ask both children how they are feeling so child can hear impact of their action and parent can understand what led to the event
- return toy to other child
- seek to address the situation so both children's needs are met
- encourage children to understand what led to this situation and how it could be avoided.

Look back to the earlier section on communication and the different styles of parenting and decide what actions are most effective. What message is being communicated in each case?

Putting it into practice

For you at home

Take time once a day for a week to think about one incident from each day. Reflect on what you said. Did you give a clear explanation? Did the child or children understand you? Did your involvement allow warm relationships to be maintained?

Think about any changes you would like to make.

For your workplace team

How effective is your organization at making clear its expectations of you? Select ways in which it does this well. Identify an area that would benefit from changes. Discuss it with others.

For the families you work alongside

Use the charts in SKIP's Child Development and Behaviour module to help parents understand what sort of explanations are appropriate at different ages.

Encourage the use of natural and logical consequences (see page 27) where these are safe.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: Limits and Boundaries

Why have rules?

Children need rules and boundaries. Our homes need rules and boundaries. Why is this? Let's look at an example from sport:

Why does rugby (or any other sport) have rules?

- So that people don't hurt each other too much.
- To make it a game that everyone knows how to play.
- It gives it structure.
- To keep things fair for everyone involved.
- Helps players to build skills – they know what to expect.
- To give it its own identity.
- Everybody gets a fairer shot at success.
- So people know which way to move.
- It creates an equal playing field.
- It makes the game more enjoyable and easier.
- Helps the referee to make the right call.
- So people can't take advantage unfairly.
- With no rules the strongest would run everything the smaller ones would get stomped on and hurt.

And it's the same for families! Call them rules, or call them something else "Guiding Lights we Live By" if you want! But it is also important that these rules be put into practice with respect.

"Except in rare times of great stress or danger, there is no reason why we cannot say 'No' to children in just as kind a way as we say 'Yes'. Both are just words. Both convey ideas which even tiny children are smart enough to grasp. One says, 'We don't do it that way', the other says 'That's the way we do it.'"

John Holt



Putting it into practice

For you at home

What are your family's 'guiding lights' or rules? Are there too many? Or maybe not enough? Remember they are there for the same reason rugby has rules. Sometimes even rugby refs go overboard with the rules – or don't apply them to all the players fairly. Then everyone says that the fun went out of the game!

Talk with your family about why the rules at your house exist. Review and revise those that you think might be outdated.

For your workplace team

Workplaces need rules or guiding principles just like families do.

Ask your workmates to each write down what they think are the most important rules at work. You might be surprised that some people's lists have nothing in common! Some view one rule as important – others hardly gave it a thought!

Brainstorm about the relevance of this to families. How might differing perceptions lead to sticky situations?

Consider respectful ways to get around this at work and home. (You may find if your workplace has manuals full of Rules – does anyone take any notice of them? Are they too daunting? And so it is with rule filled homes.).

For the families you work alongside

Share what you have learnt from the activities above with the families that you support through your work.

Work with them to identify rules at their homes – and evaluate their effectiveness together.



In a nutshell – have as few rules as possible and stick to them!

- *Children appreciate rules that are fair and just.*
- *Telling children what is acceptable works better than telling them what is not acceptable.*
- *Setting high expectations is fine if they are positively expressed.*
- *Setting appropriate limits for the child's age and the situation reduces the need for disciplinary encounters.*
- *Monitoring and guidance is essential.*

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Consistency and Consequences

Being consistent in your interactions with children is one of the most challenging aspects of parenting. To be consistent, your words and actions need to match. For example, if you shout at a child when telling them not to shout, you are giving inconsistent messages. The child gets a mixed message and does not learn the lesson you are trying to teach. Children learn by watching your behaviour and listening to what you say – and comparing the two.

Children also learn from watching how we adults behave towards each other. If we are caring and gentle, children are able to watch and learn how to be caring and gentle. If we yell and hit each other, children will copy.

Double standards

Children see through the “Do as I say not as I do” philosophy pretty quickly in life. We cannot teach our children how to behave by doing the opposite ourselves.

This poem expresses the results of not walking our talk.

How a Child Learns

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, she learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, she learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, she learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, she learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, she learns to like herself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

© Dorothy Law Nolte, 1972

Children also learn from finding out the results or consequences of their behaviour. For example, young children will repeatedly turn a light switch off and on (if given a chance to!) and eventually they realise that the light switch controls the light. Likewise, they learn that touching something hot can burn them.



A great deal of research shows that child conduct problems are related to inconsistent discipline. The best way of changing undesirable behaviour is to change the consequences which follow it.

Children's Issues Centre, page 24

The good news is that if we wish to be truly effective at teaching or correcting our children about our values, beliefs, and expectations – whilst avoiding shame or pain – we can.

Consequences

Consequences are the things that happen as a result of something. In the context of discipline, they're most often the results of a child's misbehaviour.

Natural consequences are those that follow on naturally from a behaviour; for example, the natural consequence of running out onto the street may be getting hit by a car. Logical consequences are those that follow according to reason or logic, for example, running out onto the street may result in being kept inside for a period of time.

The 3 Rs

To use consequences as a tool to change behaviour with children, they should be:

- **related:** there should be a close connection between the behaviour we want to change and the consequences we use. The connection may be direct or indirect.
- **reasonable:** the consequences should not impose unfair hardship or expectations on the child.
- **respectful:** the consequences should respect the child's rights and dignity. Children should never feel humiliated or powerless as a result of our actions.



The following story illustrates the use of consequences to change a child's behaviour.

Max loved Rocky, the family dog, but he suddenly started hitting him. Max's mum was nervous that the dog, even though it was an old family pet, would bite Max. She kept telling him not to hit him, but Max kept doing it.

Max's mum put Rocky outside, where he stood at the sliding door looking in at Max with a sad dog expression. Max kept asking if Rocky could come back in, but his mum said no because you keep hitting him.

The next day Rocky was allowed inside and Max didn't hit him. He got a big hug from his mum – so he gave Rocky a big hug too.

The consequence was directly related: the dog was put outside when Max hit him.

His mother's actions were reasonable: Max and the dog were safe.

The consequence was respectful: the mother respected Max's ability to take responsibility for his own actions.



The use of logical consequences like having children clean up their own messes, or natural consequences like children being late for school when they don't get up in time, can be effective and help children to develop responsibility.

Children's Issues Centre, p 24



What are Natural Consequences?

It's not always obvious what the natural consequence of a behaviour might be. A good test is to ask yourself "What would happen if I did nothing?" In Max's case, the natural consequence of Max hitting the dog could have been that the dog bit him.

As adults, we can find many examples of natural consequences. For example, the natural consequences of not putting our rubbish out on the right day is that our rubbish stays around for another week; if we let the dishes stack up for days and days, we run out of plates; if we keep driving when the petrol guage is on empty, the car will stop. Unfortunately, there are some we don't heed, for example some of us smoke even though we know the natural consequence is likely to be serious illness.

Sometimes, the natural consequences for children may be dangerous and we have to intervene. However, if there is no serious safety issue involved, natural consequences are almost always effective.

What are Logical Consequences?

Logical consequences often involve some form of rule that has been imposed by those in charge: for young children, this means parents and other caregivers, early childhood centre staff, teachers and perhaps people in the community such as shopkeepers, the local librarian, or the swimming pool attendant. The consequence may be indirectly related (but consistent) and should always be reasonable and respectful.

There's a fine line between a logical consequence and a punishment: the trick is to make sure the child knows what the consequence for unwanted behaviour will be then to apply the consequence calmly and neutrally. As adults, we experience logical consequences all the time, and many involve official laws and rules.



Here are some examples of consequences for children. Some natural consequences are dangerous – don't use them!

Behaviour	Natural Consequence	Logical Consequence
Child always puts his puts shoes on the wrong feet.	He'll get sore feet. He may be laughed at.	
Child takes longer and longer to get ready to leave the house for creche.	She is late and misses out on fun.	
Child won't get dressed without much help and coaxing.	She has to go to kindergarten in her pyjamas.	
Child persists in ripping a book.	Book destroyed – doesn't have it any more.	Put the book away.
Child dive bombs others in the pool.	Dangerous: don't do it! Other children are hurt	Attendant bans child from the pool for a week.
Child refuses to put away her toys when she finishes playing with them	Toys get into a big mess; she can't find ones she wants.	The child may not get out a new toy until the used ones have been put away.
Children fighting in the car.	Dangerous: don't do it! Distracted parent will have a crash.	Parent pulls over and stops the car; tells the children she won't drive while they fight and waits calmly till order is restored.

Remember:

"If logical consequences are used as a threat or imposed in anger; they cease being consequences and become punishment. Children are quick to discern the difference. They respond to logical consequences; they fight back when punished."

Rudolf Dreikurs, 1964, p 72

If we keep the 3Rs in mind and ensure that we are not using consequences to impose our will, we will ultimately be successful in guiding our children to take responsibility for their behaviour:

If we only manage one or two of the three Rs then it is likely we will not experience success in getting our children to learn the desired lesson.

Why punishment is not the same as discipline

Think about this question:

“When you are handling children’s misbehaviour, what are the **ideal outcomes** that you would like to achieve?”

Typical replies may include:

- I want them to learn to behave differently.
- I want them to take responsibility and make amends.
- I want them to become more responsible in the future.

They might also include:

- I want our relationship to still be in good condition afterwards.
- I want them to change their behaviour but still feel good about themselves.

Now, in the house that you grew up in, were the words discipline and punishment used differently from each other? For some people the answer is “Yes” and for others it is “No”.

Over the years, these words have often had their meanings blended together. However, pick up a dictionary and you will find that they are very different from each other. Take a look:

Discipline: “to follow and learn”

Punishment: “to suffer for an offence” or “to subject to severe penalty”

Hmmm . . . It appears that the word discipline fits with our ideal outcomes and the word punishment does not! The trouble is that, often, much of the parenting toolkit that we have inherited has included many ideas on punishment and very few on discipline.

Many people believe that a child won’t learn the lessons of life unless there’s a bit of **suffering** to make it stick! This is simply not true! A child may well remember the pain or suffering inflicted and avoid behaving that way again but their behaviour is motivated by fear, not by a growing sense of responsibility.

Affection and respect do not imply a lack of firmness.

PRINCIPLE SIX: A Structured and Secure World

Children's behaviour is influenced by the situation they are in. If they are in a room full of china ornaments their natural curiosity leads them to learn about them by touching them. If they are in the supermarket, they see things they want. As adults, we can structure these situations to avoid problems before they arise.

Structure the situation in a way that makes it less likely children will engage in inappropriate behaviour. Childproof areas where children play e.g. shut gates, cover power sockets.

Use calming rituals – songs, stories – to refocus children into safe and acceptable activities.

Use your own behaviour, and that of siblings and peers to role model acceptable behaviour – do what I do, not what I say.

Avoid taking children to the supermarket when they (or you!) are tired and hungry.

It has been said that 'Prevention is the best cure'! Often adults do things inadvertently that increase the chances of children behaving their way into trouble. If we fine tune some of these things, it makes life a whole lot less stressful for all concerned. Let's take a look at a few

Make a child-friendly space for play

Children need to be able to explore and touch what is in their play space. Nature has genetically designed them to learn this way. Usually stereos and fine china are not in the parent's 'explorable and touchable' category. However this doesn't stop them from placing these items in accessible places. With time children will learn not to touch precious things unless they've been given the OK – but we need to be realistic, and not mess with nature's wiring for exploration by constantly saying "Don't touch!"

Create routines

The idea of routines freak some parents out! They see them as inflexible army-like ways of managing family life. They seem like an addition to their daily workload and pressures. But it certainly doesn't have to be like that!

It has been shown by writers such as Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber that from as early as birth, infants benefit from routines. From these they grow to know what to expect. Familiarity with a routine, and a knowledge of what is expected as a contribution, are supporting foundations for growing co-operation in the family.

Putting it into practice

For yourself

Think about your own behaviour towards other adults when you are around children. What are they learning from the way you speak and behave? Select one thing you would like to change, decide how you can change that behaviour, and every day for a week check in with yourself to see if you have changed it.

For your workplace

Talk with those you work with about behaviours in the workplace. Do we model what we preach? If not, what can we collectively do to change this?

When working with parents and caregivers

Use an appropriate SKIP pamphlet such as the supermarket survival pamphlet or the tantrums pamphlet to discuss with parents and caregivers how they could structure these situations to avoid trouble before it arrives.

Teaching by example

We need our children to learn what respect looks like, sounds like, and feels like. We need to role model it for them so that they can learn these important life lessons that will support them throughout their lives into healthy work and personal relationships.

We need to give to our children what we want to receive from them. Albert Einstein once said that teaching by example isn't one way – it is the only way.

Respect for culture

Each and every one of us sees the world through the eyes of the culture in which we were raised. It is one of the things that gifts our family its uniqueness.

It is an important part of who we are – part of our identity, and needs full respect at all times.

When we work with others from a different culture – or even a different part of our own culture, we need to be 100 percent mindful that ours is not 'the only way', but only 'my way'.

There are many treasures to be found in working with those who hold a different cultural world-view than our own.

If we keep our minds and hearts open, we may tune in to the old wisdoms that others hold in their lives. Wisdoms that have been passed down as a legacy.

We may even like to embrace some of these And hold them a little nearer to our own hearts. And we do not have to give up anything of our own to do this. We will only grow richer for it.

Contacts, Resources and References

Contacts

SKIP has a range of pamphlets for parents and resources for trainers. For more information email skipinfo@msd.govt.nz

Resources

SKIP leaflets Jealousy and Fighting, Keeping Kids Safe, Managing Behaviour For Under Fives.

References

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