

### Moving Beyond Discipline

Children who are impulsive, oppositional, inattentive, hyperactive and aggressive will need constant parental monitoring and socialization involving redirection, warnings, reminders, and consistent follow-through with consequences. However, one of the hardest things to do when a child is disruptive is to move beyond the Time Out to repair and rebuild your relationship with your child. This means not holding onto grudges and resentment after consequences have been implemented and continued praising, encouragement for positive behaviors as well as teaching in problem solving, emotional regulation skills, and self-management. Be patient with your children as well as with yourself.

### To Sum Up...

- Be polite.
- Be prepared for testing.
- Monitor and control personal anger in order to avoid exploding suddenly; give warnings.
- Give 5-minute Time Outs with 2-minute calm at the end.
- Carefully limit type of behaviors for which Time Out is used.
- Use Time Out consistently for chosen misbehaviors.
- Don't threaten Time Outs unless you're prepared to follow through.
- Ignore child while in Time Out.
- Use nonviolent approaches such as loss of privileges as a backup to Time Out.
- Follow through with completing Time Out.
- Hold children responsible for cleaning messes in Time Out.
- Use Time Out regardless of setting.
- Support a partner's use of Time Out.
- Don't rely exclusively on Time Out—combine with other discipline techniques, such as ignoring, logical consequences and problem solving.
- Expect repeated learning trials.
- Plan backup loss of privileges for older children who refuse to go to Time Out or stay in Time Out.
- Build up bank account with praise, love and support.
- Use personal Time Out to relax and refuel energy.

### CHAPTER SEVEN

## Natural and Logical Consequences

One of the most important and difficult tasks of parenting is to prepare children to be more independent. This training begins at an early age. An important way to foster decision making, a sense of responsibility and the ability to learn from mistakes is through the use natural and logical consequences. A natural consequence is whatever would result from a child's action if there were no adult intervention. For instance, if Ryan slept in and missed the school bus, the natural consequence would be that he would have to walk to school. If Caitlin did not want to wear her coat, then she would get cold. A logical consequence, on the other hand, is designed by parents as a negative consequence inherently related to the misbehavior. A logical consequence for a youngster who broke a neighbor's window would be to do chores in order to make up the cost of the replacement. A logical consequence for bed-wetting would be to require the child to strip the sheets and put them in the wash. In other words, when parents use this technique, they refrain from protecting their children from the negative outcomes of their behavior.

### Examples of Natural Consequences

- If child breaks her toy when angry, she will have no usable toy.
- If clothes are not put in hamper, the clothes will be dirty.
- If child jumps in mud puddles, he will have to wear wet shoes.
- If child is late for dinner, the food will be cold and family members will have left the table.
- If child doesn't eat at meals, there will be no food until the next meal and she'll be hungry.

### Examples of Logical Consequences

- If child can't keep crayons on the paper, they will be taken away.
- If child refuses to eat dinner, there will be no snacks or dessert.

- If child doesn't keep her gum in her mouth, it will be taken away.
- If water is splashed out of the bathtub, the bath will end.
- If child can't use a quiet voice in the library, then he will have to leave.
- If child can't stay in backyard, then she'll have to play inside.
- If glasses are left in the living room, children cannot drink there the next day.
- If child hasn't had his afternoon snack by 4:30 pm, there will be no snack before dinner.
- If child watches more television than allowed, then the same amount of television is taken away the next day.
- If the child doesn't put her bike away in the garage, then use of the bike is restricted that evening.

Natural and logical consequences are most effective for recurring problems where parents decide ahead of time how they are going to follow through. This approach can help children to learn to make decisions, be responsible for their own behavior, and learn from their mistakes. In the following pages, we will discuss some of the problems that can occur when setting up logical and natural consequences and effective ways to overcome them.

#### Be Sure Your Expectations are Age Appropriate

Most natural and logical consequences work best for children five years of age and older. They can be used with younger children, but parents must first evaluate carefully whether the children understand the relationship between the consequences and the behavior. For instance, if Alexandra is not ready to be toilet trained but she is made to clean her underpants or change her bed, she may feel unduly criticized or humiliated. Moreover the logical consequence is an undue punishment. However, to deny dessert or snacks to a child who has refused to eat dinner is an appropriate consequence since the child learns that not eating dinner causes hunger. Of course, natural consequences should not be used if children may be physically hurt by them. For example, a preschooler should not be allowed to experience the natural consequences of sticking a finger into an electrical outlet, or touching the stove or running in the road.

When thinking through the natural consequences that may result from your children's inappropriate behaviors, it's important to be sure that your expectations are appropriate for their age. Because of the cognitive skills involved, natural consequences will work better for school-age children than for preschoolers. Logical consequences that young children do understand are "if—then" statements. For instance, "If you

don't keep your gum in your mouth, I will have to take it away." Or for a child who points scissors at someone, "If you can't use the scissors carefully, then I will remove them." In these examples, the logical consequence of not using something properly is having it removed.

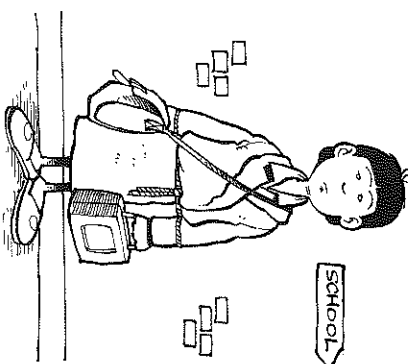
#### Be Sure You Can Live with the Choices

When attempting to carry out natural and logical consequences, some parents find it difficult to allow their children to experience the outcomes of their actions. They are so sympathetic towards their children that they feel guilty for not coming to their aid and may intervene before the consequence occurs. For instance, Carla tells her daughter Angie that the natural consequence of dawdling in the morning and not being ready for day care on time will be to go in pajamas. When the time comes to enforce this, however, she can't bring herself to let Angie go in her pajamas and dresses her instead. Such over-protectiveness can handicap children by making them incapable of handling problems or mistakes.

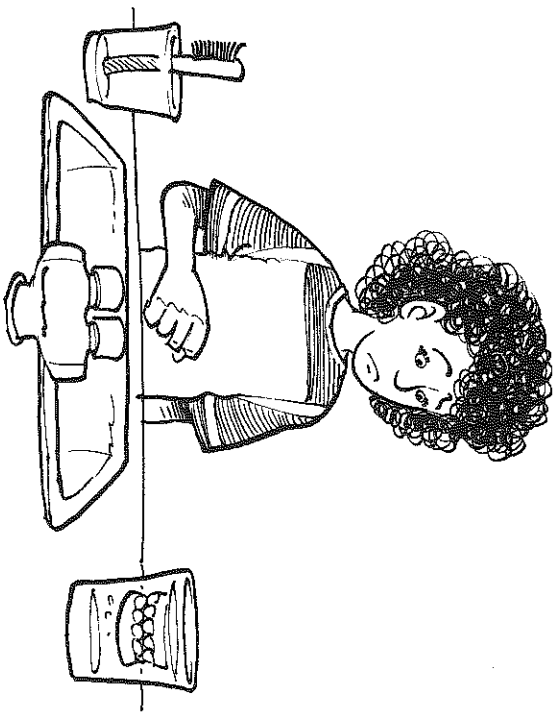
When using consequences it's important to think about the pros and cons of applying this technique to particular misbehaviors. Be certain that you can live with the consequences and that you are not giving idle threats. In the example above, Carla should have first considered whether or not she would be willing to follow through and take Angie to day care in her pajamas if she continued to dawdle. Failing to follow through with an agreed-upon consequence will dilute your authority and deprive your children of opportunities to learn from their mistakes.

#### Consequences Should Be Fairly Immediate

The natural and logical consequences approach doesn't work when the consequences of misbehaviors are too distant. The natural consequences of not brushing teeth would be to have cavities. However, since this might not occur for five to ten years it would not be effective. Similarly, overeating may have long-term consequences that are too distant to affect children's behavior in the short-term. Permitting youngsters to neglect homework and watch television every night until the end-of-the-year report card



*Be sure you can live with the consequences.*



*Avoid consequences that are too distant.*

shows they have failed is another consequence that is too delayed to have any influence on their daily study habits. Such long-term punishers may instead lead children to feel hopeless about their abilities.

For preschool and school-age children it's important that the consequences closely follow the inappropriate behavior. If Daniel damages another child's toy, then it should be replaced as quickly as possible and he should have to help pay for it through chores or from his allowance. If Lisa does not put her clothes in the laundry hamper, she should have to wear dirty clothes. In this way, Lisa and Daniel will learn from their inappropriate behavior and will probably behave more appropriately the next time.

#### **Give Your Child Choices Ahead of Time**

Sometimes parents use this approach in a punitive way, not letting their children know the possible consequences in advance. Linda's father comes into her room one morning and says, "You aren't dressed and it's time to leave, so you're coming right now in your pajamas." She is given no warning and does not have the choice of deciding to be ready by 8 o'clock or to change in the car on the way to school. Not surprisingly, Linda will probably feel resentful and will probably not see herself as responsible for the consequences of her behavior.

Discuss the various consequences with your children ahead of time so that they can think about them and know that they are responsible

for the decision. Linda's dad could say, "Since you're having a hard time getting ready in the morning, you can have an alarm clock or go to bed half an hour earlier." Or he might say, "Either you get dressed by 8 o'clock, or you'll have no breakfast and will have to get changed in the car." Another example of giving a child choices would be to say, "If your toys aren't picked up by seven, there will be no snack or story." It is up to the child to decide how to respond. These approaches can help children to see, through positive consequences, that it is better to respond positively rather than negatively.

#### **Consequences Should Be Natural or Logical and Nonpunitive**

Occasionally parents come up with consequences that are not logically or naturally related to an activity. Consider a mother who washes her son's mouth out with soap because he said something bad. While she might argue that it is logical to clean out the mouth of a youngster who has been swearing, this is more likely to make her son feel dirty, degraded and angry. Other parents create consequences that are too punitive. "Since you wet your bed last night, you can't have anything to drink after noon today," or "Because you didn't eat your dinner, you will have to eat it for breakfast," or "Since you hit me, I'm going to bite you." Children will feel resentful and perhaps even retaliate against such consequences. They will be more likely to focus on the cruelty of their parents than on changing their own behavior.

A calm, matter-of-fact, friendly attitude is essential for deciding upon and carrying out consequences. The natural consequence of not wearing a coat when it's cold outside is to become chilled. The logical consequence of not doing homework might be to miss a favorite television program. The natural consequence of not putting clothes in the hamper is that the clothes don't get washed. These consequences are not degrading nor do they cause physical pain. Instead, they help children to learn to make choices and to be more responsible.

#### **Involve Your Child Whenever Possible**

Some parents set up a natural and logical consequence program without involving their children in the decisions. This may well cause the children to feel cross and resentful. Instead, you should consider this an opportunity for you and your children to work together to promote positive behaviors, allowing them to feel respected and valued. For instance, if your children are having problems fighting over the television, you might say, "You seem to be having trouble agreeing about what to watch on TV. I feel bad about yelling at you and I want to make the

evenings better for all of us. You can decide either to take turns choosing programs or not watching it. Which would you prefer? Involving your children in the decision making about consequences often reduces their testing when there is a problem and encourages cooperation.

### Be Straightforward and Friendly

Parents may sometimes undermine their consequence program by becoming angry with their children and criticizing them for being irresponsible. This defeats the program's purpose of letting children discover for themselves, through experience, the negative consequences of their behavior. Moreover, the anger and disapproval may reinforce the misbehaviors.

It's important to be straightforward and assertive about consequences, to be prepared to follow through with them, and to ignore your children's protests or pleading. If they refuse to accept consequences, you should use Time Out or the loss of a privilege, whichever best fits the situation. Remember, your children will try to test the limits, so expect testing. But it is important not to lecture or criticize them or offer sympathy after the consequence occurs. Instead, once it is completed, they should be given a new opportunity to be successful.

### Consequences Should Be Appropriate

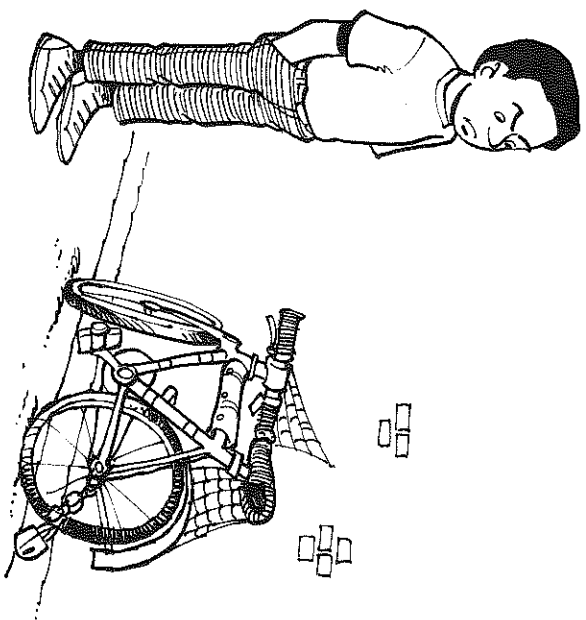
Sometimes parents come up with a consequence that lasts too long and unduly punishes their children. Say seven-year-old Ben rides his bicycle in the road after being told to stay on the driveway. The logical consequence would be for the parents to lock it up. Locking it up for a month, however, would be excessive and bound to make Ben feel cross and resentful. Moreover, it wouldn't allow him any new opportunities to be more successful in handling his bicycle responsibly. Although some people believe that the stronger and longer the punishment, the more effective it will be, the opposite is true.

A more appropriate consequence in Ben's case would have been to lock up his bike for 24 hours and then allow him the chance to be successful in the way he rides it. If four-year-old Kathy is using crayons and starts coloring on the kitchen table, a logical consequence to present her with might be, "If you can't keep the crayons on the paper, then I will have to take them away." If she continues to color on the table, then the crayons would have to be removed. However, they should be returned within half an hour to give her another opportunity to use them appropriately. The principle is to make the consequences immediate, short, to the point, and then to quickly offer your child a chance to try again and be successful.

Remember that the consequences approach, like any other parenting technique, take time, planning, patience and repetition. Most of all it requires a calm, respectful attitude.

### To Sum Up...

- Make consequences age-appropriate.
- Be sure you can live with consequences you set up.
- Make consequences immediate.
- Give child choice of consequence ahead of time.
- Make consequence natural and nonpunitive.
- Involve child whenever possible.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Use consequences that are short and to the point.
- Quickly offer new learning opportunities to be successful.



*Avoid consequences that are too severe.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## Teaching Children to Problem Solve

Young children usually react to their problems in ineffective ways.

Some cry, others hit and still others tattle to their parents. These responses do little to help children find satisfying solutions to their problems. In fact, they create new ones. But research shows that they use these inappropriate strategies either because they have not been taught more appropriate ways to problem solve or because their inappropriate strategies have been reinforced inadvertently by parents or other children's responses. Parents can help by teaching their children how to think of solutions to their problems and how to decide which solutions are most effective.

It also has been shown that children's temperament influences their ability to learn more effective problem solving skills. In particular, children who are hyperactive, impulsive, inattentive and aggressive are more likely to have cognitive difficulties with social problem solving. Such high-risk children perceive social situations in hostile terms, generate fewer prosocial ways of solving interpersonal conflict, and anticipate fewer consequences for aggression. They act aggressively and impulsively without stopping to think of non-aggressive solutions or of the other person's perspective. On the other hand, there is evidence that children who employ appropriate problem solving strategies play more constructively, are better liked by their peers, and are more co-operative at home and school. Consequently, parents have a key role in teaching children who are aggressive and impulsive to think of more prosocial solutions to their problems and to evaluate which solutions are better choices and more likely to lead to positive consequences than others.

While teaching effective problem solving will be particularly helpful for high risk children, efforts should be made to improve social skills and cognitive problem solving for *all* children. Indeed, it is the job of parents to prepare

today's children to be responsible citizens who are capable of thoughtful decision-making and coping with interpersonal conflict. Children's successful development into adulthood is dependent on their ability to use critical judgment, effective decision-making skills and perspective-taking regardless of their innate ability and cultural or family background.

### Parent as Model

Undoubtedly, you are already teaching your children more appropriate problem solving tactics without realizing it, especially if they have opportunities to observe you using problem solving skills (see Chapter Problem Solving between Adults). It is a rich learning experience for them to watch you discussing problems with other adults, negotiating and resolving conflict, and evaluating the outcome of your solutions.

While you may not want your children to observe all your problem solving meetings, many daily decisions you make provide good opportunities for them to learn. For instance, children learn from noticing how their parents say no to a friend's request. They watch with interest as Dad receives Mom's suggestion to wear something different. Is Mom sarcastic, angry or matter-of-fact in her request? Does Dad pout, get angry, cooperate or ask for more information? Watching parents decide which movie to see on Saturday night can teach much about compromise and negotiation. Your children learn much of their behavior by observing how you react to life's daily hassles. You can help further by thinking your positive problem solving strategies out loud. For example, you might say, "How can I solve this? I need to stop and think first. I need to stay calm. What plan can I come up with to make this successful?"

For children, the process of problem solving can be divided into six steps and presented as the following questions:

- What is my problem? What am I supposed to do? (Define the problem and feelings involved)
- What are some solutions? What are some more solutions? (Brainstorm solutions)
- What are the consequences? What happens next?
- What is the best solution or choice? (Evaluate consequences in terms of safety, fairness and good feelings)
- Am I using my plan? (Implementation)
- How did I do? (Evaluating the outcome and reinforcing efforts)

For children between the ages of three and eight, the second step—generating possible solutions—is a key skill to learn. While implementation



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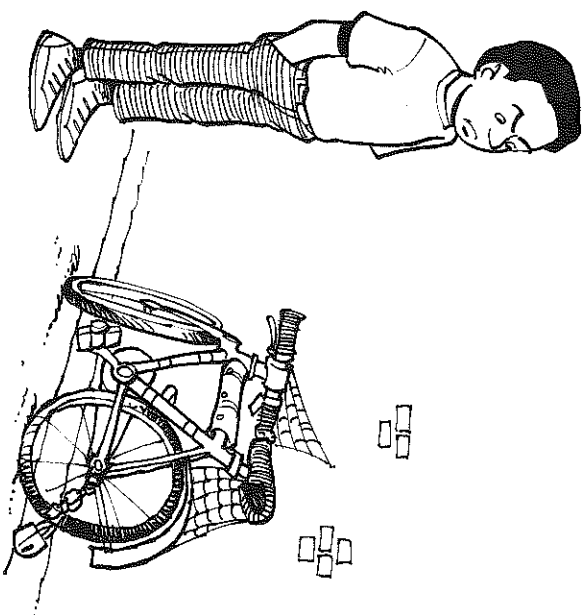
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