

# Be the Best Parent You Can Be

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Why Positive  
Discipline Works



CMLC  LBEC



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"I am not a perfect parent  
but I am a good parent  
because I try."

—Jennifer, parent of  
Lexie, Aiden and Torren  
(Nanaimo, BC)

**Parents** are the most important influence in a child's life. Parents are role models and teachers for their children. One of the hardest jobs of a parent can be managing his or her child's behaviour. A child having temper tantrums does not know if you are single, married, rich or poor but she is aware of how her tantrum is dealt with and possibly what happens when she has a tantrum.

This pamphlet will give you ideas on how to:

- Be the best parent you can be.
- Manage your child's behaviour in a positive and healthy way.
- Understand your child.
- Use the 3 Rs: **Respect**, **Responsibility** and **Response** as a parenting guide.
- Understand why parenting without violence has long-term positive results.


**This is called discipline.  
Discipline is not punishment.  
Discipline teaches.  
Punishment hurts.**

## What exactly is discipline?

The word discipline has different meanings for different people. We are using the word discipline to mean raising children in a non-violent way. Non-violent means without hitting, spanking, using physical force, name-calling, putting them down, threatening or yelling. Discipline does mean setting rules, listening, problem solving and setting a good example.

As loving parents we want what is best for our children, that they grow up happy, listen well, get along with others, share toys and not scream and yell.

Making sure that our children grow up well-behaved does not mean that we need to use violence. Showing, explaining and encouraging certain behaviours are some of the ways we can ensure our children grow up to be happy and productive. These ways do not involve spanking, yelling or name-calling.



Children raised in a non-violent way are more social, make friends more easily, are less aggressive and are more likely to do well in school.

### Example of using encouragement

Let your school-age child know that in five minutes you will be getting ready to go home from an outing. He then has time to finish the activity. Stay true to your word. When five minutes are up, leave. This gives you and your child some control. If done consistently, everyone knows what to expect. When everyone is a part of the solution, the problem is easier to solve.

## Why not spank?

CWLC believes that it is best to raise children in a non-violent way. Research shows us that violence, like spanking, hitting and name-calling, although apparently effective in the moment, does not work and can do harm. Children learn how to behave properly by watching and copying parents, teachers and other important adults. If children are hit or spanked they then learn that it is okay to do the same to others. They also learn that violence is how to react to anger or frustration.

**Some people worry that if they do not spank, then their children will get into trouble or that they are not being disciplined. In fact, the more children are spanked, the more likely they are to get into trouble.**

As a parent it is our responsibility to teach our children non-violent ways to deal with difficult situations. Reacting differently – in a non-violent way – when we are angry and frustrated shows our children that they can handle their own anger and frustration in a non-violent way. They learn how to behave appropriately.

### Example of dealing with parents' own anger

It is okay to say to your 10-year-old who just broke a window that you are too angry to deal with the problem and you need to calm down. e.g.: "I will be back in 10 minutes when I can talk about this without getting mad and we can talk about a solution together." It is okay to be angry. You should name the emotion, deal with the situation when calm, and then find a solution.



## You, your child, your parenting

When thinking about your job as a parent some of the most important questions to ask are:

- What kind of parent do I want to be?
- How do I want my children to remember me growing up?
- Sometimes we react strongly to everyday events. Take a minute and ask yourself, is this going to matter in a year?

It is also important to think about what is special or unique about your child. This can help you understand your child and therefore deal more effectively with her behaviour.

- Is your child capable of playing with others?
- How does your child react to new situations? Does he become easily excited or is she cautious with new situations?
- Does he become easily frustrated?
- Does she like being around lots of people? Does he enjoy playing alone?

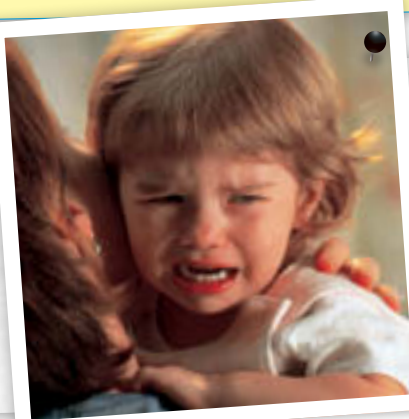
Understanding that some behaviours are normal does not mean that you should not deal with them. It means that you have some understanding as to why your child may be behaving that way.



## Examples related to child development

- Two-year-olds play well with others for short periods of time, like to say NO and let everyone know who is boss.
  - Two-year-olds like to assert themselves. This is part of how they grow and learn. Two-year-olds also have tantrums.
  - A frustrated two-year-old can easily have a meltdown.
  - Your two-year-old is not able to understand sharing; he or she is better at playing alongside another child.
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- At three and four years of age they slowly begin to understand sharing as they begin to play with other children.
  - Toys are a possession to children. Allow certain toys to be put away if other children are coming over to play.
  - Some children get very upset in large crowds and noisy places. Tantrums can be avoided if you pay attention to their behaviour. Sometimes what we see as bad behaviour is our child trying to tell us that they have had enough.
  - While older children continue to need and want limits, they also need to have some say in family rules and expectations.

**Your child is not intentionally behaving in a certain way to be mean to you.**



## Some things to think about when disciplining

**Consistency is important.** Try responding to your child in the same way each time. Now he knows what to expect. Choose how you respond. Be firm but fair.

Looking at the **bigger picture** can often gives clues as to how to discipline.

- What else is going on for your child?
- Is there a new brother or sister in the family?
- Are there new people in the home?
- Is the daycare worker different?
- Does your child need quiet time at home or to spend time with just you?
- Does your child eat a well-balanced diet?

**Nutrition does have an impact on behaviour and ... the best way to ensure good cognitive function and behaviour are to regularly offer nutritious meals.**

*—British Journal of Nutrition*



**Look for good behaviour.** Sometimes children do anything to get our attention, even misbehave just so that we stay involved with them. Sometimes that is all we see and respond to. Tell him or her that you are proud when you see or hear something good.

Think about the times when you parented well.

What did you do?

- Did you speak calmly?
- Did you use words your child would understand?
- Did you look at your child when you spoke?
- Did you prevent a tantrum by leaving before your child got really tired?
- Did your child have enough sleep at night? Did you leave the mall before both of you had reached your patience limit?

**Remember your successes as a parent. They are what keep you going!**

**Preschoolers need between 10 and 12 hours of sleep.**





Respect

Response

Responsibility

Some people find it easier to discipline in a non-violent way using the 3 Rs of parenting. The 3 Rs are **Respect**, **Response** and **Responsibility**.

## Respect

Respect defines the way we treat each other and ourselves. Respectful behaviour includes showing caring and considerate behaviour towards others. The term respect is one that is often misunderstood. It means that parents and children treat each other well. They are kind and thoughtful toward each other.

Discipline methods that are respectful teach children how to behave appropriately and why certain rules exist.

Spanking children simply hurts them and they may change their behaviour to avoid the pain. Or they may learn to become sneaky so they are not caught doing something wrong.

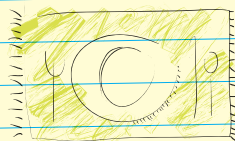
Respect includes considering the age of your child. We can expect different behaviours from toddlers than from preschoolers and from elementary school children than from teenagers.

Respectful discipline helps children learn not only what to do but also why.



Toddlers become frustrated easily. They need opportunities to be successful. For example, choose clothing that they can easily pull on and off.

Preschoolers like to help. Find simple tasks for them such as putting the spoons on the dinner table.



Treat school-age children with dignity. Speak to them politely and don't talk negatively about them when they are in the room.

Teens need their privacy. Don't read their emails or listen in on their phone calls.

When we respect our children they will respect others and us.



## Response

Response is how we communicate. We need to talk to our children and we need to listen to them.

It's important to tell your children in words they can understand the family rules and expectations. Some families like to put a list of the family rules on the fridge where everyone can see them.

Children have short attention spans, so when you talk to them use short sentences, simple words and keep your messages short.

Before you leave the house, you need to remind young children of your expectations.

- When you are talking to children get down to their level.
- Sit together at the table or crouch down so that you are eye to eye. It's difficult for kids to pay attention to you if they have to look way up to see your face.



Listening is an even more important part of communication than talking. When your child is talking to you, pay attention. Let him finish without interruption and when he's done take a minute to make sure you understand what he is trying to say.

Response is more than just talking and listening. It is important that we connect with our child by spending time with him.



Connect with them by reading to them on a daily basis.



Connect with them by inviting them to help you with your chores.



Connect with them by playing a game they like to play.

## Responsibility

Being responsible means being accountable for our actions. Children need to learn how to take responsibility for their behaviour and their decisions. When we teach them why it's not okay to break the rules we are teaching them to take responsibility.

All good parenting material will teach you helpful discipline skills that teach children to take responsibility for their behaviour. Child discipline requires some thought and planning but once you know what you are doing it's easier for you and your child.

Parents have a responsibility to learn how to raise kids and to know that it's perfectly acceptable to ask for help.



There is so much information about parenting and so much to learn about this rewarding (yes, it is rewarding!) job. You do not have to do this alone. Talk to someone you trust. Make sure you connect with people that are supportive and knowledgeable. Ask your local family service agency about DVDs, books, classes and support groups.

When you take your child shopping explain what is going to happen. Tell her where you are going and why and let her know what you expect. That way she will be prepared for this outing and less likely to misbehave.



When she has a temper tantrum, you might be tempted to hit her and yell at her to be quiet. A respectful way is to first understand that she's having a tantrum because she's bored, tired or hungry. There is a reason for her tantrum.

But that doesn't make it okay. She needs to learn that tantrums are not the way to behave. You can quickly pick her up and move to a quiet place where she can settle down.

When you remove her, you teach her that she can't disrupt other people and that she's not going to get her own way by screaming and kicking in public.

You can also plan to avoid this in the future by making certain she is rested and fed and by paying attention to her while you're shopping.



- Make sure that any information you are getting is correct. One way is to ask whether any workshop leader has quality parenting education training. That means they are trained to teach and facilitate parenting. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Don't be afraid to stand up to family members who may have different ideas about discipline. Each generation has different ways of parenting. Encourage your family to attend a parenting group with you, or share some of the ideas with them that you have learned from the program.
- Remember, discipline takes time and patience!



It is okay to ask,  
everyone has  
questions!



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