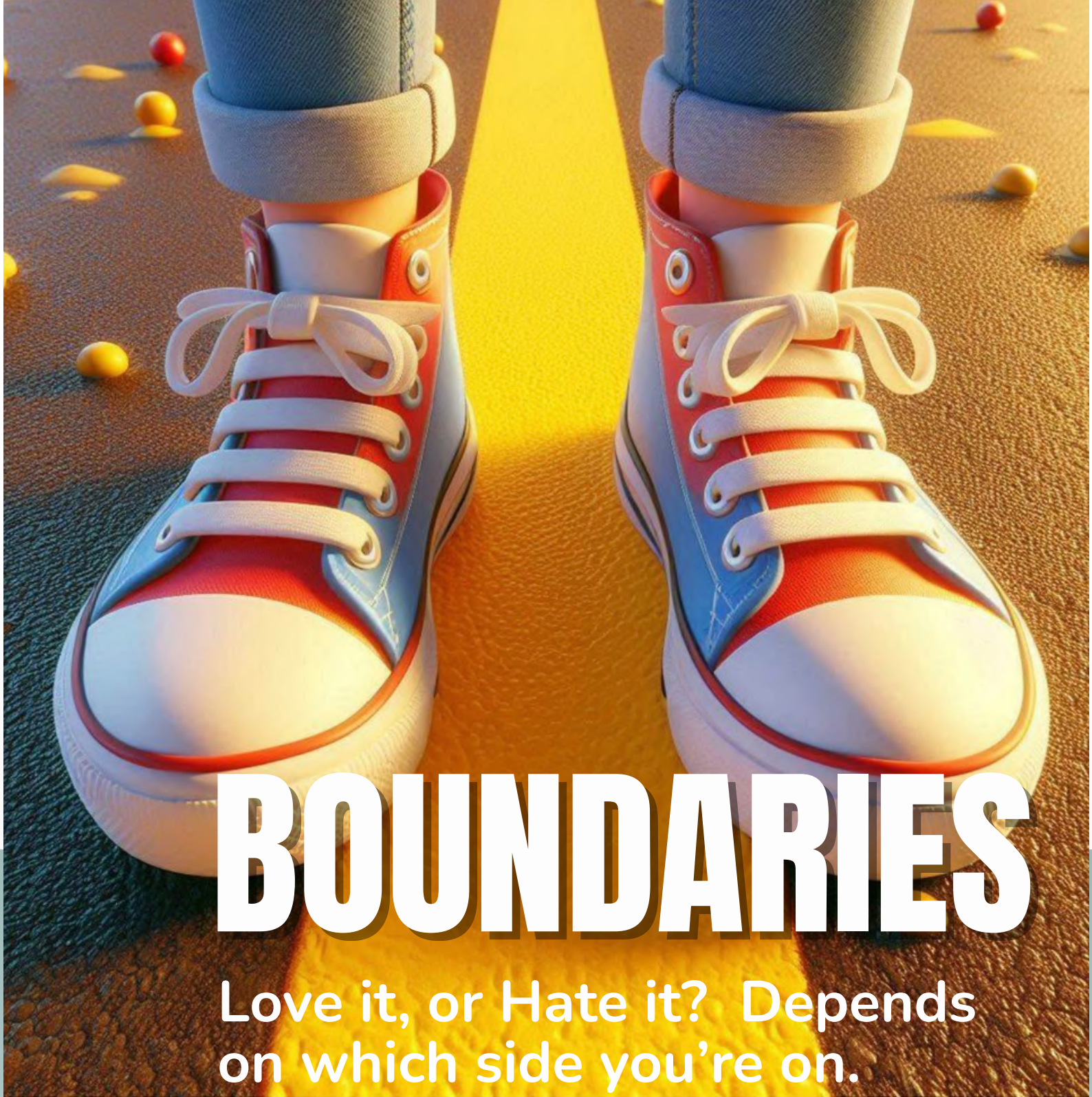


A pair of red, white, and blue sneakers with white laces and white soles. The sneakers are positioned on a yellow path that runs down the center of the frame. The path is flanked by a brown, textured surface. Scattered around the path are several small, round beads in yellow and red. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

BOUNDARIES

Love it, or Hate it? Depends
on which side you're on.

Practical Tips to Restore
Peace in Your Home

H^YPE@WORK
PRACTICE

Hello Amazing Parent!

HOW THE SPIRAL STARTS ...

You yell, they yell louder. Doors slam, feelings explode. Everyone walks away frustrated, and nothing really gets resolved.

I created this guide because that's the last feeling I want you to have when things get tough with your child.

If you are here, it's probably because those struggles have left you feeling frustrated, drained, and even questioning whether you are a good parent. Let me assure you – you are not alone, and yes, you are a good enough parent.

Hi! I'm Yolanda Huijsamer, play therapist, counsellor, parenting coach and founder of Hope@Work Practice. My mission is to support parents in their parenting journey. Every generation has its challenges, but our modern-day parent generation is really struggling in a world that is fast-paced and driven towards immediate gratification. You've Googled "How to discipline my child" more than once, and yet, here we are.

This guide is your first step to help you feel calm, clear and equipped to handle those "What just happened?!" moments.

No more guessing, feeling alone, or wondering if you're a terrible parent. You've got this – and I'm here to help you every step of the way!

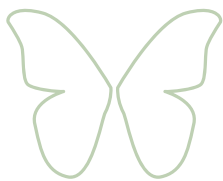
PS:

I've created a link in the contents that you can click to flip to the section you need during a tough moment.



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Introduction

We forget sometimes – because they talk like us, argue like us, and push back like us – that they are not like us. Not yet.

Our children aren't just small adults. Their brains are still developing. Their nervous systems are still adjusting. Their sense of identity, impulse control, and ability to understand others' viewpoints – all of it is still a work in progress. And yes, this includes our tweens and teens.

The brain keeps developing until well into a person's twenties. And the areas that handle emotional control, understanding consequences, and empathy? Those are usually the last to grow up.

When we expect them to act like fully mature adults, we're not really setting a boundary – we're just setting them up to fail.

So when we expect them to act like fully mature adults, we're not really setting a boundary – we're just setting them up to fail.

They need the freedom to be loud, impulsive, reactive, and genuine. It's not that they want to be difficult; they're just still figuring out how to handle things differently.

Every meltdown, every bit of pushback, every little wobble is an opportunity to learn, not a sign of failure.

Let them be human. That's where the real growth starts.

KIDS DO
WELL IF
THEY CAN.



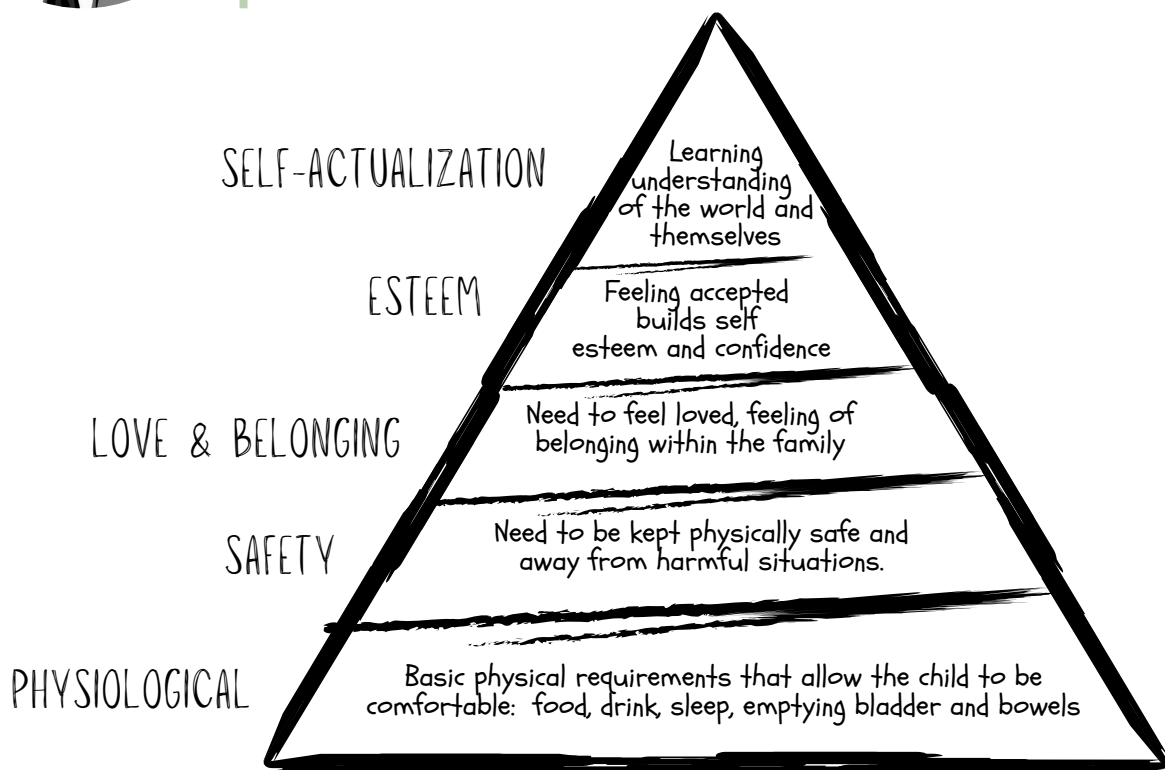
CHAPTER 1

If a person's needs aren't met, learning becomes really tough. For instance, a kid who goes to school on an empty stomach will struggle to focus, and a child who's feeling really upset won't be able to pay attention when you talk to her.

At the most fundamental level, we all have physical and emotional needs that need to be fulfilled for learning to happen. It doesn't matter if this learning takes place at home through discipline or at school through education – those needs are still there.



Back in the 1940s, American psychologist Abraham Maslow came up with what he called a 'hierarchy of needs.' He thought that to reach their full potential, people needed to satisfy each level of this hierarchy.



Starting at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, children need their basic physiological needs met and to feel safe first. Safety is all about protecting the child from harm and abuse. Only after these two are taken care of can we address the need for love, belonging, and self-esteem. Children naturally crave love and want to feel like they are part of a family. Feeling that they belong and are nurtured not only strengthens their self-esteem, but also their self-respect, which in turn helps them respect others. Love, belonging, and respect are therefore the building blocks of good discipline; self-esteem is the foundation that we need to nurture, not tear down.

D is for discipline

The word discipline actually comes from disciple, which means learner, student, or pupil. It traces back to the Latin word 'disciplina' that's been around since the eleventh century. Back then, it was all about teaching, learning, and giving guidance.

There's a lot of confusion in Western culture regarding discipline, mainly due to various interpretations of biblical scriptures.

I'm not a pastor or a theologian, but I've read a lot about this topic since people ask me about it all the time. The reality is, spanking isn't mentioned in the Bible at all. What's actually referenced is the rod of discipline. Shepherds don't hit their sheep with rods; they protect them by leading them to safe pastures where they can eat and stay away from predators, guiding them to avoid getting hurt on their journey, and bringing them back to the flock if they stray.

Discipline is rather the practice of setting limits while still being emotionally attuned to your child and centers on teaching and working with your child to help him build skills to make good choices.



Too often, we forget that discipline really means to teach, not punish. A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioural consequences.”

DANIEL J. SIEGEL & TINA PAYNE BRYSON

Why do we discipline our kids?

What we really want to do with discipline is teach our kids in a way that helps them build skills and resilience to deal with tough situations and emotional disruptions that could cause them to lose their cool.

How can we reach this goal? By connecting. Our relationship with our kids should be at the heart of all our actions. When we discipline, our aim is to connect with them on a profound level that shows our unconditional love. It's often during their misbehaviour that our children need our connection the most.

Since a child's bond with an adult is crucial for their growth, it's no wonder that, across the board, a child's biggest fear is losing that connection with the most important adult in their life.

Why not consider discipline as one of the most caring and supportive things we can offer our kids? Focusing on teaching and developing skills from a foundation of love, respect, and emotional bonds will not just affect your family and community, but also future generations.



Our relationship
with our kids
should be at the
heart of all our
actions.

“

Too often, we forget that discipline really means to teach, not punish.

A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioural consequences.”

DANIEL J. SIEGEL & TINA PAYNE BRYSON



“GIVE A MAN A FISH, AND HE’LL
EAT FOR A DAY. TEACH A MAN
TO FISH, AND HE’LL EAT FOR A
LIFETIME.”

CHAPTER 2



If boundaries are like the umbrella's canopy, shielding the child from the discomfort of everyday challenges, then the pole symbolises the consequences that assist you, as the teacher, in upholding those boundaries.

Boundaries serve as the caring guidelines that promote children's safety, health, and social-emotional development.

Rather than viewing it as just a list of rules to follow, consider discipline as a mindset that helps us recognise countless chances to bond with our kids in ways that genuinely align with their growth needs.

What should I keep in mind when setting boundaries?



Flexibility and adaptability. Boundaries should change as kids grow up.



It takes the child's age, developmental stage and any existing diagnosis, such as neurodevelopmental diagnosis into consideration.



It defines family values and clarifies to our kids what our family does not do and does not say.



It should be clear and consistent.



Too many boundaries? Balance is key in boundary setting.



When the child is old enough, most boundaries can be co-created between the adult and child. This way, the child will feel valued.

When I chat with parents about discipline, the most common question that comes up is: "What should I do when..." This urge to take action comes from our own upbringing. Punishment often came right after misbehaviour, sometimes even before things calmed down. This approach to parenting is often referred to as 'nipping it in the bud.' The idea is that if you punish quickly and harshly enough, your child will associate the punishment with their actions, making them remember the consequences before they misbehave again... If you don't, they might forget what they did.

The reality is that consequences and punishment aren't the same, even though people often use those terms interchangeably in Western parenting.

C is for consequence

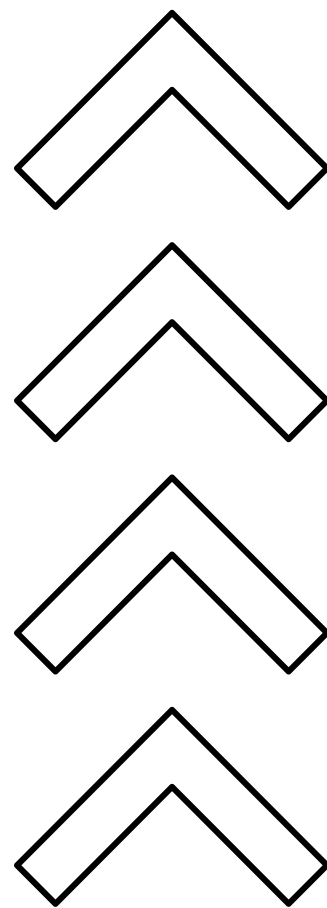
Consequences are just the results of what we do. If you're nice and friendly to the other kids at the park, you're likely to make some friends. On the flip side, being mean and leaving others out will have the opposite effect.

Unlike punishment, consequences are a powerful and effective way for kids to learn. Research shows that after modeling, it's actually mistakes and failures – whether they were intended or not – that lead to undesirable outcomes, and these are the main ways we learn as humans. Plus, making mistakes can really help boost confidence.



Parenting is not telling your child what to do when he or she misbehaves. Parenting is providing the conditions in which a child can realize his or her full human potential."

GORDON NEUFELD



What do we want to achieve with consequences?

The aim of consequences, in many types of discipline, is to show kids that their choices and actions lead to negative outcomes. However, there's a delicate balance between consequences that genuinely help kids improve and those that just make them feel bad without really teaching them anything, especially if they struggle to think critically, analytically, and hypothetically.

The main point is that your role as a parent is just to guide your child's awareness towards the natural results of their actions. If you ultimately cave in and read a story regardless, the consequence won't be absorbed. It's also important to recognize when a natural consequence might be slightly uncomfortable and prompt change, versus those that could be harmful.

Types of consequences

NATURAL CONSEQUENCE

These outcomes occur as a direct result of what the child has done or failed to do. They're quick, instinctive reactions that come with some risk, which can influence the child's behaviour. A genuine natural consequence takes place when the parent takes a step back and lets the natural result of the child's actions unfold. It's all about cause and effect. Often, this is sufficient for the child to grasp the lesson.

LOGIC CONSEQUENCE

These kinds of consequences come without judgment and help with decision-making and learning. They operate on a foundation of mutual respect. It's enforced firmly yet fairly, based on a solid and gentle assumption. Often, an extra logical consequence isn't needed and isn't justified. It also needs to be reasonable, rational, and connected. If the consequence isn't linked to the behaviour you're aiming to limit or promote, there's a strong chance it will be ineffective at best, and at worst, completely useless.

For a consequence to really work, it needs to match the level of harm done. If your kid is 5 or older, you can let them help decide what kind of consequence would be most effective for them.

ILLOGIC CONSEQUENCE

This is when there's no direct link between the child's problematic behaviour and the consequences the parent suggests. Kids end up feeling resentful towards their parents. Without a clear and logical chance to learn, the child won't really change their behavior in a lasting way.

Am I the Captain of the ship?

A lot of parents think it's crucial for their kids to view them as friends. But honestly, kids really need us to take the lead. I'm not saying parents should dominate their children; I'm saying they should take charge. There's a distinction. Control here is more about trying to make up for feeling weak or scared.

Being in charge means we can stay calm even when things get tough – whether it's the rough seas of life or our kids testing our patience, ignoring our requests, or having meltdowns. When our children see us as steady, calm, and consistent – no matter how they're feeling or acting – they can relax, knowing they can rely on us to help them through the tough times. As the Captain of our home and family ship, we create an environment that offers the quiet and comforting authority our kids really need.

We understand what happens in a child's brain when we respond to their stress with calmness and connection: the brain's regulatory core finds its balance, the child feels secure knowing their needs will be met, and as a result, their challenging behaviours decrease in frequency and intensity. We also recognise that while we can use disciplinary methods like time-outs, taking away privileges, and expressing disapproval to encourage good behaviour, these tactics are rooted in fear rather than connection, leading to only temporary results. It's really just a 'behavioural mask.'



WHEN WE GIVE CHILDREN
STRATEGIES INSTEAD OF
PUNISHMENT, WE TEACH THEM
SKILLS INSTEAD OF FEAR.

CHAPTER 3



At last! We are at the practical part of this ebook.



REMINDERS

These are just examples. You can use them word-for-word, but you don't have to. Speak in your own voice. Parent from the heart!

Start small. Even trying one new phrase this week can shift the energy in your home.

What these practical guidelines will explain is:



How to discuss boundaries before the situation or escalation occurs, so that it won't come as a surprise to your child, aka Before the Storm.



When emotions have escalated, and you're in the thick of things, what to do, aka During the Storm.



How do you implement consequences in a gentle and peaceful way, aka After the Storm.

“

The principle of internal goodness drives all of my work - I hold the belief that kids and parents are good inside, which allows me to be curious about the 'why' of their bad behaviours.:

DR BECKY KENNEDY

BEFORE THE STORM

Set boundaries based on family values

Creating a home focused on values can really help your kids feel safe. Family values allow us to be more in control as parents. You might notice that the times you feel the least in control as a parent are when you're uncertain about your stance on an issue, which can lead you to rely more on strict discipline. A lot of this comes down to taking a moment to chat with your co-parent and asking, what are our family values?

Having conversations with your kids early on is an incredibly useful way to set a limit or define a boundary before it gets tested. Discuss these boundaries when everyone is relaxed and explain why the boundaries exists. Keep the list (as well as the conversation) short and simple.

Reminding your kid of your family values during everyday conversations will build emotional muscle memory.

EXAMPLE

Family value: **Respect**

How do we implement this in our family? *By being helpful.*



"This morning, you had helping hands... when you brought in all those groceries, and you helped me pack it all away."

How do we implement this in our family? *How we speak to each other.*



"You used kind words when you spoke to your brother. I appreciate it."

Suggestions vs directions

A mom once shared with me:

“
My children just don't seem to realise that I'm not really asking. I'm making a polite request. It amazes me that they don't understand this.

When asked for an example, it became obvious why her kids weren't reacting:

“
Shall we all hop in the car, sweetheart?" or "Honey, we should probably start heading out now."

It really does make a lot of sense. Suggestions are found at the far left side of the Choice Spectrum. A suggestion is the gentlest way to prompt a child to take action because it opens up a wide array of options. It gives the child a large open space to decide against what you are 'inviting' them to do. And after a long, tiring day, it doesn't really matter if you suggest or ask - both can leave your child feeling confused and you, as the parent, feeling like you've lost your authority.

Suggestions and requests (whether polite or not) give young kids too many options and too much decision-making power at an age when they might not be ready for it, which can confuse a child and frustrate a parent. When you make a suggestion or a request, a child closely associates it with being given a choice, and when they think about a choice, they engage the part of their brain that deals with what feels safe and good instead of what is right for others. The bigger picture isn't really in focus for kids under a certain age.

Clear guidance gives a child the comfort of knowing there's a caring yet firm presence steering the ship. In simpler terms, a child understands that there's someone leading the family's journey. You're the Captain of this ship.

EXAMPLE

A good direction ...

clarify expectations.



"It's time to get into the car."

is empathetic but firm.



"I understand it's hard for you, but we are going now, Peter."

clarify family values.



"No, no, Sarah. That is not a word we use in our family. We try to speak kindly."

is authoritative and warm.



"Lights out when you finish that page, Elisha. You have a big day tomorrow."

prepare for an instruction.



"This is the way I want you to pack up, love, because we are going to pick Danny up soon."

create a feeling that you and your child are going in the same directions.



"This is the way we do it, Sophie."



How you communicate with your child has a resounding impact on the likelihood that he or she will take you seriously and comply with instructions."

KIM JOHN PAYNE

Where we are going, and then how we will get there

Giving a child some direction helps them see the bigger picture. You're laying out the family's priorities that shape the day and help the child grasp where this part is headed. Instructions offer structure and guidance. They simplify complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps for a child.

EXAMPLE



Suggestion: "Lisa, would you like to get in the car?"

Instruction: "Lisa, it's time to put away the bike and get in the car. Let's put the bike back in the shed, and make sure to close the door."



Suggestion: "Are those kind words? Would you like to think about an apology?"

Instruction: "Something must be bugging you. You may read your book right here until you're ready to tell us what is up, and we'll put things right with Anna."

When you give a direction along with an instruction, start by sharing the overall idea with the child, and then break it down into the smaller steps needed to achieve it.



Direction (big picture): "Dion, we are going to leave soon because we have to pick up your brother early today."

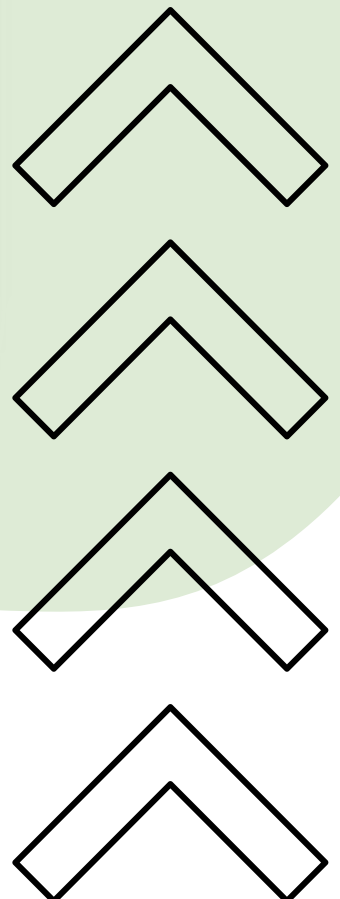
Instruction (smaller picture): "Come and help me put your lunch in your backpack, and then we need to get our coats on. It's gotten really cold today."

The example above can easily be adapted for toddlers, tweens and teens.



TODDLER TIP

If you have a toddler, remember that they will struggle to process too much information at once. So you will have to break down the instructions into smaller steps. They also don't have a sense of time, so keep it to 'leave soon' rather than 'in two minutes.'



DURING THE STORM

You've set a boundary. But your child continues to push back.

PAUSE

Take a moment to pause, breathe deeply three times, and reflect on your thoughts. Studies indicate that your interpretation of your child's actions influences your reactions. Our brains are wired to focus on emotion first. If your initial thought is, "They're being rude," you're probably going to respond accordingly.

However, if you switch to saying, "They're having a hard time," it opens up room for empathy. This shift will alter how you respond, helping you remain calm and emotionally present.

ESTABLISH THE NEED BEHIND THE BEHAVIOUR

Managing our emotions is a pretty grown-up skill. As adults, we can often hit the pause button in our minds when we feel like yelling, cursing, or acting out against someone. Kids, on the other hand, don't have these skills – at least not to the same extent as adults. This gap in emotional regulation is a big source of stress for parents who expect their kids to handle things like they do. In reality, learning to self-regulate takes years to master.

So, your next move should be to get curious. Curiosity is key to effective discipline. Before you react to your child's behaviour, ask yourself: "I wonder what made my child do that?" Is there a sensory issue at play? Is my child overly tired and struggling to think clearly? Does my child feel disconnected? Is there a specific skill they're missing? Is my child anxious or stressed about something? Calm problem-solving and empathy are essential tools for cooperation.

VALIDATE

Validation helps a child shift from being reactive to being receptive. By validating their feelings, we can ease their internal turmoil, help them settle down, and guide them towards making wiser choices. When they sense our love and acceptance, even if they realise we disapprove of their behaviour, they can start to take back control and activate their higher thinking. This process transitions them from a reactive mindset to one where they are more open to the lessons we aim to impart.



TODDLER TIP

Toddlers are in the middle of a massive brain leap and are prone to big mood swings. Model staying calm and compassionate while maintaining structure.



"This feels hard for you."

"I see you feel [insert emotion]."



TWEEN & TEEN TIP

Tweens are in the throes of great hormonal and social change. Try to understand what they mean and then discuss what an adult might think or feel. Teens are practising grown-ups. Our role is less about making decisions for them and more about helping them make decisions at this stage.



"Hmm. I may have a different idea of what that phrase means.

Help me understand what do you think it means?"

"I understand that you're sad. You really wanted to go." Help me understand what your plan was."

LISTEN

If you're anything like most of us, you probably end up talking way too much when it comes to discipline. Just chatting away to a child who's emotionally charged isn't effective at all. When your kid's feelings are all over the place, one of the least helpful things you can do is try to make them understand your point of view. The issue with saying something logical like, "He didn't mean to hit you when he threw the ball" is that it assumes the child can actually hear and respond to reason right then. But when your child is feeling hurt, angry, or let down, the logical part of their brain isn't really working. Make sure to really listen to what your child is expressing. Don't take their words too literally. Your role is to understand the emotions behind what they're saying.



TODDLER TIP

You can help your toddler to find the words to describe his experience, but let him share his experience from his own perspective without judgment.



"You feel really sad that John didn't want to play with you. I'd feel the same way."



TWEEN & TEEN TIP

Talking too much, especially at this stage of development, often compounds the problem. Especially when they're in trouble and already understand what they've done wrong.



"It really hurt that you didn't get invited, didn't it? I'd feel left out, too."

REFLECT WHAT YOU HEAR

When you think about what you hear, you really hone in on what your child has shared with you. It's all about acknowledging their feelings and showing empathy. If you approach this with care, it helps a child feel listened to and understood. Just be cautious about how you reflect their emotions. You definitely don't want to blow a fleeting feeling your child has into something larger and more lasting than it actually is.

EXAMPLE

Imagine your six-year-old getting really upset because her big brother keeps teasing her, and she starts shouting repeatedly, "You're stupid and I hate you!"

To show comfort, you can express your compassion by kneeling down to her eye level, giving her a hug, rubbing her back, and making caring facial expressions. It's also important to help your child understand the difference between their feelings and their actions.

You validate her experience:



"I know, honey, I know. You're really upset."

You listen to her feelings, then you reflect back to her what you're hearing:



"You're so angry, aren't you?"

Now we hit the tricky part, and you really have to tread carefully. You want your daughter to grasp her feelings better, but you also need to prevent her temporary emotions from turning into lasting beliefs. The aim of your response should be to ensure your child knows you get what she's going through, which will help ease her intense emotions and bring some calm to her inner turmoil.



"I don't blame you for being so mad. I hate it when people tease me like that, too. I know you love Jimmy, and that you two were having so much fun together just a few minutes ago, when you were playing. But you're pretty mad at him right now, aren't you? Also, you can feel whatever you feel, but you can't always do whatever you want."

AFTER THE STORM

After the emotional storm has passed, you will start to engage the upstairs brain through consequences.

EXAMPLE

Let's take the following example to see how the different types of consequences can be applied.

A mom of a six-year-old girl discovered a small box of crayons while she and her daughter were tidying up the little girl's room. A few days earlier, they had gone shopping for school supplies, and her daughter had taken a liking to these specific crayons. Although the mother hadn't purchased them, her daughter had managed to sneak them into her pocket. When the mother found the crayons, she chose to confront her daughter about it. As soon as the little girl spotted the crayons in her mom's hand and noticed her confused expression, her eyes widened with fear and guilt.

In a moment like this, the parental response is going to largely determine what a child takes away from the experience.

ILLOGICAL CONSEQUENCE (PUNISHMENT)

A parent who emphasises punishment might quickly shout, spank, send the kid to her room, or take away something she was looking forward to. The punishment doesn't really connect to the child's misbehaviour and what the parent is suggesting as a consequence. Rather than concentrating on the feelings rising within her or reflecting on her choice to take the crayons from the store, she'll be fixated on how harsh and frightening her parent is for punishing her like this.

NATURAL CONSEQUENCE

The mother gave her child a chance to sit with and recognize that uncomfortable yet valuable guilt she was feeling after taking something that wasn't hers. Sure, guilt can be a good thing when it shows a healthy conscience. When the mother spoke to her daughter, she knelt down, and a sweet conversation followed where the six-year-old initially denied taking the crayons, then claimed she didn't remember, and finally, with her mom patiently waiting, explained that her mother didn't need to worry because "I waited until the saleslady with the big hair wasn't looking" to slip the crayons into her shorts pocket. At this point, the mother asked a lot of questions that helped her daughter think about ideas she hadn't considered before: "Do you know what taking something that doesn't belong to you is called?" "Is stealing against the law?" "Did you know that the woman with the big hair in the store spent her money to buy those crayons so she could sell them?"

In response, the daughter lowered her head even more; her bottom lip began to jut out, and large tears started streaming down her face. She clearly felt remorse for her actions. As she sobbed quietly, the mom embraced her, not interrupting or hindering the natural process unfolding, but instead joining her by saying, "You're feeling bad about it." The daughter nodded, and the tears kept flowing. The mom was able to comfort her daughter in this touching moment where the discipline was unfolding naturally without her needing to do or say much. The mother held her close, letting her cry and experience her feelings, and after a few minutes, she gently wiped away the tears and encouraged her daughter to take a deep breath. They then briefly continued their chat, discussing honesty, respecting other people's belongings, and making the right choices, even when it's tough.

By starting this open and thoughtful conversation and letting the discipline come up naturally by focusing her daughter's attention on the guilt she was already experiencing, instead of just jumping to immediate consequences, the mother helped her daughter engage her higher thinking skills. This way, she could reflect on her actions, understand their impact on others, and pick up some fundamental lessons about ethics and morality.

LOGIC CONSEQUENCE

Sometimes, natural consequences are enough to bring the lesson across. In this example, a logical consequence seems fit. The child is old enough for you to give her two choices:



"You can either return the crayons to the saleslady with the big hair, or you can take some of your pocket money to pay for it."

In this example, the little girl returned the crayons. Lesson learned.

A Final Word



When we practice respectful discipline in parenting, both our internal and external attitudes will change, and we'll become more adaptable, even when our kids push back hard. Consequently, we'll enhance our ability to understand what's truly needed instead of getting stuck on a single belief system. I genuinely hope that this method of discipline can lead both us as parents and our children to have more open minds and more caring hearts.

DISCIPLINE STEPS



SCRIPTS TO CONNECT DURING CO-REGULATION

When you are in the connection cycle, your words will make your child feel **acknowledged** and **understood**, *without any judgment*. Children need less fixing and more presence – a quiet signal that says, **"Your voice matters."** It will strengthen connection.

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOL (1-4 YEARS)



"I'm here. You're safe."

Dysregulation is a cry for connection.
Your calm is the anchor.

Your kid will feel secure when you show him that you notice him, his emotions matter, and that you're there for him.

EARLY PRIMARY (5-7 YEARS)



I can tell that you're are feeling _____. It's totally okay to feel that way. I'm here whenever you're ready to chat.

LATER PRIMARY (8-11 YEARS)



"I would feel _____ if that happened to me as well."

Acknowledging kids' emotions makes them feel at ease when sharing their thoughts.

Encouraging kids to create their own ways to handle frustration helps them build problem-solving skills.

TEENS (12+ YEARS)



I can tell you struggled with _____. Can you help me understand how we can make it easier for you next time?

TIPS

Lower your voice.
Your tone says more
than your sentence
ever could.

Before solutions
can land, emotions
must be seen.

