When Your Child Misbehaves -
HOW TO DISCIPLINE POSITIVELY

For parents of young children
What is positive discipline?

Positive discipline is a method of teaching appropriate behaviour by interacting with children in a kind but firm manner. Caregivers who use positive discipline aim to prevent behaviour problems before they start. They help their children to behave appropriately through teaching, routines, understanding and support.

What is the difference between positive discipline and punishment?

Discipline is more than punishment. Discipline is about using respectful and non-violent methods to teach children how to behave appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE DISCIPLINE</th>
<th>PUNISHMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching children how to behave through:</td>
<td>Controlling behaviour through aversive means such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Rewarding correct behaviour</td>
<td>▶ Threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Correcting misbehaviour</td>
<td>▶ Slapping/Flogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Respect</td>
<td>▶ Insulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Non-violence</td>
<td>▶ Name calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Consequences</td>
<td>▶ Embarrassing the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Shouting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Hitting with objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can I use positive discipline at home with my child?

Positive discipline is most effective when it is used consistently by all caregivers. Here are some tips to help you to use positive discipline strategies at home.

**TIP # 1: CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

*Supervise your child at all times and child proof your home to ensure that the child can safely explore their surroundings.*

**TIP # 2: ESTABLISH A ROUTINE**

*Young children do better when they know what to expect.* Routines help children to develop self-discipline. A routine can help them to feel secure, less anxious and more in control.

**TIP # 3: HAVE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD’S BEHAVIOUR**

*Sometimes we forget to tell our children what we expect.* Have 3-5 clear expectations which you share with your child to help them understand what is acceptable behaviour (e.g. Be kind, Be safe, Be helpful, Be Responsible, Be Respectful). Remember that children learn what these acceptable behaviours mean by watching your example. Your interactions with your child teach them how to manage their feelings and how to interact positively with others.

**TIP # 4: PLAN AHEAD**

*Run errands when the child is not likely to be tired.* Talk with your child and explain the expected behaviours before going into specific situations such as going to the supermarket. Always travel with activities which can keep your child occupied such as toys, books and crayons.

**TIP # 5: BUILD A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD**

*Spend time with your child talking, laughing and playing.* This quality time helps children to feel a sense of connection and belonging. It also minimizes misbehaviour. Sometimes, allow the child to decide how the quality time should be spent.
TIP # 6: BE KIND BUT FIRM

Stay calm and respond to misbehaviour firmly but with respect and kindness. Consider what the child may be trying to say through their misbehaviour. Work together with your child to find respectful and helpful solutions.

TIP # 7: REDIRECT NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

When your child misbehaves redirect them to the appropriate behaviour. Explain what they should be doing or give alternatives to help them replace the inappropriate behaviour with a more acceptable one.

TIP # 8: OFFER CHOICES

Choices give young children a sense of control and help them to develop their independence. Give careful thought to the choices which are suitable for your child and follow through with what your child chooses.

TIP # 9: CALM DOWN BEFORE ADDRESSING MISBEHAVIOUR

Avoid attempting to discipline a child when you or the child is angry. When you and the child are both calm you are able to think clearly and deal with the situation in a manner that is firm but fair.

TIP # 10: CATCH THEM BEING GOOD!

Acknowledge your child when he/she behave appropriately. Give specific praise so they are aware of what they are doing well.
Did you know that?

1. Children who experience positive relationships are less likely to engage in challenging behaviour.

2. Children are more likely to respond positively to caregivers with whom they have a trusting relationship.

3. Non-punitive discipline methods are more effective in the long-term than punishment.

4. Young children do better when there is consistency, routine and lots of encouragement!
How do I know the difference between developmentally normal behaviour and misbehaviour?

It is important that we have realistic expectations about children’s behaviour. These expectations should take the child’s stage of development into account. Each stage comes with challenges and if we do not understand what behaviours are appropriate we can mistake some behaviours as intentional misbehaviour. For example, a two-year-old may become easily frustrated or refuse to share their toys. Below are some examples of developmentally normal behaviours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR</th>
<th>DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being active/Energetic</td>
<td>Young children have a need to explore and may find it hard to sit quietly for long periods (e.g. church, story-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantrums</td>
<td>Young children are just beginning to learn how to handle frustration and may throw temper tantrums when upset (e.g. When they do not want to go to bed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Young children can be curious and ask many questions. Their grasp of language is growing and they are excited to use the new words they are learning (e.g. They may ask lots of questions or interrupt you when you are on the phone).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>As children grow they become increasingly determined to do things on their own and for themselves (e.g. They may prefer to choose their own clothes, dress and feed themselves).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What should I do when my child misbehaves?

1. Stop what you are doing and focus on your child
2. Remain calm and speak in a normal tone of voice
3. Remove the child from the situation if out in a public area
4. Get down to your child’s level
5. Let them know you understand how they are feeling before telling them about the behaviour you expect. e.g. “I know you would like to play with your toys not now but it is nap time”
6. Review the expected behaviours and tell them what they can do
7. State the consequence for not behaving as expected
8. Acknowledge when the child corrects his or her behaviour
9. Follow through with a consequence if the behaviour does not improve
10. Remember to reconnect and restore the relationship through play and affection

Take care of yourself!

Being a parent is rewarding but dealing with a young child can be tiring at times. It is difficult to practice positive discipline when you feel overwhelmed. Be sure to find ways to take time for yourself and know who you can turn to for support when needed.

✔ Eat a healthy diet
✔ Exercise
✔ Stay in touch with friends and family
✔ Find activities which make you happy and do them regularly
✔ Say no to extra responsibilities
✔ Spend time in nature

Produced by UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area in collaboration with Ministries of Education in the Eastern Caribbean Region