

Help Your Misbehaving Child With These Brain Based and Effective Discipline Techniques

<https://www.positiveparentingconnection.net/effectively-help-misbehaving-child-brain-based-discipline-techniques/>

Posted on March 1, 2018 by Ariadne Brill •



Discipline Your Misbehaving Child With Positive and Proven Strategies

Many years ago I was convinced that strict discipline was important for building strong character and raising a good, responsible child.

When my toddler fussed about not getting something he wanted I was firm with my decisions and words. Many of my friends praised my ways. What they didn't see was the behind the scenes reality of using strict discipline.

While I was becoming increasingly preoccupied with disciplining my *misbehaving child*, I also worried. I controlled. I set really high expectations that my son wasn't ready to meet.

The truth about being strict with discipline

Despite everything I did to be consistent and strict, the misbehavior continued.

Once I understood something fundamental about children and their behavior, things started to click into place.

Not just for me but for my child as well. The misbehavior was replaced with learning and understanding. My approach was transformed into a very positive, developmentally sound approach to discipline. My child was choosing to be cooperative and continues to do so even as a tween.

Fixing misbehavior and Understanding Your Child

Here are some things that can help you understand your child and find a positive path for addressing challenging moments.

- Children don't create battles and children don't want to behave badly.
- Misbehavior is part of growing up, it signals a request for your guidance.
- Getting kids to listen well and behave well begins with getting kids to feel safe, loved and understood.
- Having a close relationship to you is vital to nourishing your child's growing brain so your child will feel ready and able to follow your expectations.
- Balancing kindness and firmness is what is most helpful to growing strong, resilient and capable children.

Raising healthy kids starts with a strong connection to you and addressing misbehavior with balance and respect.

You might have heard quick behavior fixes such as “pick your battles” and “give clever and mean consequences” but these approaches ignore what your child needs to feel ready to change their behavior.

Here is what one mom shared with me during a parent coaching session:

“I make my son stand with heavy books in his hands, It's supposed to be a creative consequence, except after doing that he finds more and more ways to push my buttons. He also gets so angry he kicks or hits his sister. Then we do the books again...it's no use.”

While being firm and disciplining children is definitely an important part of parenting, how you go about doing this matters.

Fear is not a good motivator for long term health, growth and well-being.

Threats, counting your child down to time out, isolation and yelling lead to fear.



Getting your child to obey through strict discipline doesn't teach self-control, patience, flexibility or responsibility. It would be no different than yelling at a two year old to master a pencil grip, walk down stairs alternating his feet or ride a bike.

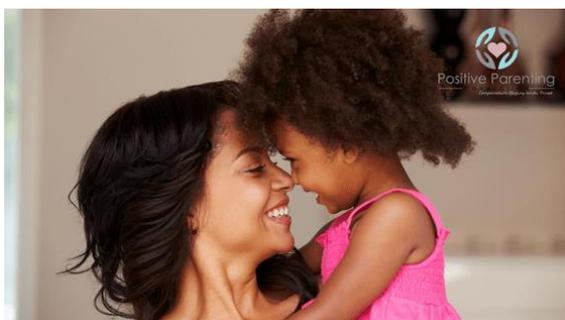
Skills to behave well take time, practice and patience.

Most of all they happen only when your child's mind and body are both ready and feeling safe.

Dr. Deborah MacNamara is a developmental specialist and author of the best selling book Rest, Play, Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts like one).

She explains that **constant battles can create insecurity and anxiety in kids** and can adversely impact their development. She reminds parents that the challenge is not to take resistance personally and instead expect it.

Parenting is challenging but it's not meant to be a battlefield.



Do you really want to spend the next several years with your child shouting, threatening, nagging and feeling exasperated day in and day out?

If you spend all day trying to fix behavior problems, lecturing and proposing consequences your interactions with your child will be more and more challenging.

Your child will more likely be discouraged, and afraid of the very person meant to love them most. Your child will also miss critical opportunities to **flex self-control skills gradually**. A skill children must develop to succeed in life.

In a survey done by “Zero to Three” it was revealed that a majority of parents thought their child should have self-control skills much earlier than brain science indicates is possible.

The fact that your child melts down out of frustration or jumps on the couch over and over again is actually normal.

A disconnect between your child’s actual capability and having high expectations is a trap for misbehavior and increases your parental stress.

The most effective way of disciplining a child when they misbehave is to respectfully guide them towards positive change.



1. Encourage Change by Saying What You Mean

If you want your child to understand your expectations, it really matters how you speak to your child. From screen limits to simply stopping a child from hitting the dog or whining about homework, the more specific you are the better.

Focus less on the misbehavior and more on what your child can do instead. That might sound like this:

- “You can use the tablet for 20 minutes, then it’s time to turn it off and we will go to the park together”

- “I see you are getting angry with your brother, come sit by me so I can help you.”
- “You can choose to go down the slide or go across the monkey bars one last time, then it’s time to get in the car.”

This works best when you **make an effort to make eye contact** with your child and use a voice that is both kind and firm at the same time.

2. Focus On Cooperation

So much of misbehavior happens because your child is feeling powerless, dismissed or controlled.

Simple choices and having bits of power helps your child feel trusted and capable.

If you jump to consequences, your child will be stuck avoiding something negative and not really thinking about how to change to a more positive or helpful behavior.



Cooperative language highlights the fact that you are willing to **work with your child** towards better outcomes.

It also gives your child the message that you trust them to make better choices. [You can read more on consequences and misbehavior here.](#)

Here are some examples on focusing on cooperation:

- You and your child are having a power struggle. Stop it by offering to work together: “Let’s find a way to make this work.” or “I’d like to stop fighting and hear your suggestion for making this work”
- Your child is angry and not cooperating with a request: Stop and offer to listen: “Can you tell me more about what’s bugging you?”
- You and your child are becoming loud and disrespectful to each other. Stop and take a break. “Let’s take a break and try this again” Follow up when you are calm.

3. Coach Your Child To Learn Self-Regulation

Sometimes your child will have a hard time and you may feel challenged. You may not be able to fix behaviors right away. Instead you may need to help your child understand her feelings first.

Respond to your child based on what your child can do, and what you have the energy to focus on, in that moment.

A crying or frustrated child needs validation and connection to feel safe again and to find calm. **Keep long term goals in mind and respond to your child with patience.**

As your child grows, so does her brain and abilities to self-regulate. Especially if you take the time to coach your child through what they are feeling, thinking and deciding.

4. Keep Calm

Getting worked up and angry will model to your child exactly what you don't want them to do. If you yell to get what you want, it's very likely your child will learn to demand and whine for what they want as well. Instead, learn to calm yourself first and keep your long term parenting goals in mind.

Raising strong, capable kids means modeling how to manage frustration and using your own self-control skills.

Dr.Laura Markham's new [Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids workbook](#) is a great resource for learning to manage yourself first and a must read if you struggle to set clear limits.

5. Avoid Punishments

Dr. Daniel Siegel and Tina P. Bryson work with the latest science on the developing brain. In their book "The Whole Brain Child" they explain that consequences and punitive reactions are actually counterproductive, not only in terms of building brains, but also when it comes to getting kids to cooperate.

Having a plan on how to handle your frustrations and how to help your child calm down, instead of turning towards consequences can make a real difference in making misbehavior change.

6. Have Patience and offer Guidance

Testing limits and making mistakes is part of your child's growing and learning journey. Strive to see mistakes and misbehavior as opportunities to understand your child and provide clear guidance. Use positive ways to show your child you **believe in their ability to do better.**

There are many positive discipline tools that can help you transform misbehavior. Children can learn to make amends, try again with second chances, make agreements with you, participate in family meetings, and more.

Jane Nelsen, D.Ed. author of the positive discipline series offers more than 52 parenting tools with the aim of helping children learn from their mistakes in a loving and supportive atmosphere. These are some of the same tools I use at home, teach in my parenting courses and coaching practice because they are respectful, simple and so effective.

Being respectful and attuned will help your child be stronger and truly ready for the real world.

The best part about this approach to discipline is that you get to choose what works for you and continuously notice what your child needs to feel safe and grow well. The more you focus on helping your child feel capable the more likely they will feel secure in your presence and behave well as a result.

Peace and Be Well,

Ariadne