

IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

QUESTION: What steps can I take toward more effective discipline in the home?

ANSWER: Good discipline doesn't just happen - it takes planning and effort. Of course, the best discipline is the preventive type. Teaching and guiding a child to achieve self-discipline is the most effective discipline.

The following guidelines may be followed to achieve more effective discipline in the home.

1. Set limits on your child's behavior. Children should know exactly what is expected.
2. Do not set too many rules. Establish rules which are important and can be enforced.
3. Set a good example for your child. Children learn more from actions than from words.
4. Allow children to be responsible for their own decisions as their age allows.
5. Praise your child for good behavior.
6. Take the time to listen to your child. Each situation is different. Encourage discussion and respect your child, but remember who is in control.
7. Be consistent. Rules should remain constant along with the results of disobeying the rules.
8. Don't threaten consequences which you are not prepared to enforce. Always follow through.
9. Be willing to change rules which may need changing as your child gets older and more responsible. Flexibility is a plus.
10. Act immediately when behavior needs to be corrected.
11. Disapprove of the behavior, not the child. Remember that the child needs to know he/she is loved unconditionally.
12. Maintain self-control. Improving behavior requires patience, honesty, and fairness.
13. Be specific in telling children what is expected. Rules should be explained but do not have to be justified.
14. Do not ignore a negative situation. Take action to change the behavior so that it will not occur again.