

POSITIVE PARENTING: How can I discipline my child?

A parent should never physically punish a child. Hitting or spanking is harmful to a child's physical, emotional and mental health & development.

So how *can* you respond to your child's behavior?

1. **CALM** yourself first.

- Take a deep breath
- Count to 10
- Remind yourself, "My child is going through something right now and I need to help them"

2. **CONNECT** with your child.

- Hold or hug your child
- Get down on their level or sit with them and make eye contact
- In calm voice, tell them "I love you, it will be ok" or "I know this is hard for you" or "Try to explain how you are feeling right now"

3. **REFLECT** on your child's needs.

- What might be causing this behavior? Is my child hungry, sleepy, sad, frustrated, sick, lonely, bored, scared, rushed, looking for attention?
- What is my child normally doing at this time? (Changes in routines can affect behavior.)
- Is there something stressful happening at school, in activities or with friends?

4. **CORRECT** the behavior.

Instead of yelling, spanking, or hitting a child, it is more helpful to:

- Distract or redirect your child
- Meet their needs
- Remove them from the situation

POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS: Try these with your child...

INFANTS:

Children at this age do not understand reasoning and cannot be disciplined. Instead of yelling, spanking, or hitting a child. It is more helpful to distract or meet their needs. To prevent from happening again, ask,

"Are there any changes I can make to my child's surroundings to prevent this from happening again?"

"What distraction items can I bring with me next time to help calm my child?"

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS:

Tell your child what the expected behavior is instead of repeating the unwanted behavior:

"Please use a soft touch" instead of "Don't hit"

Give children control. Offer them 2 acceptable choices:

"It is time to leave. Would you like to hop like a bunny or clomp like an elephant to the car? You decide."

Be consistent and follow through:

Use a sticker chart or point reward system to encourage wanted behavior.

Be a good role model. Your child is watching you to learn how to calm down when they are upset.

SCHOOL AGE & TEENS:

Set expectations! Children thrive with boundaries and rules. Make a set of family rules with your child and display them.

Help your child to problem solve on their own:

"Oops! What do you need to do about spilled milk?"

"How can you and your brother solve this problem?"

"What is your plan for getting your homework done?"

Catch children in the act of doing the right thing:

"You're working so hard on..."

"You must feel proud..."

Give children time to cool off. Physically separate yourself from your child or siblings from one another if needed.

"I love you and I can tell you are upset right now. I will give you time to cool off. Come to me when you are ready to talk."

Children learn respect only by experiencing you treating them with respect. Parenting is tough and every parent faces challenges. It's okay to ask for help. Your child has BIG emotions that they are learning how to control. It takes time and practice!
