

gently ask them what happened without forcing them to talk. Look for immediate medical and psychological attention at your regular clinic, or at a community service agency.

DISCIPLINE

There are ways for you to discipline your children when you get angry with them without overreacting or hurting them physically or emotionally.

- State clearly what you want from your children, and be consistent in your expectations. Be consistent about routines that you have taught your children. For example, if you teach your children to share the work around the house, expect them to do this work on a daily or weekly basis. Praise them for contributing to the family, and for sharing responsibility.

- Learn why your children misbehave so you can provide support and encouragement for positive behavior.

- Understand that hitting your children to discipline them can be dangerous to their health. Hitting does not teach your children to solve the problem, but it teaches them to fear. Also, hurting children teaches them to want to hit others when they are angry. When your children do something that is wrong or harmful to themselves or to other, tell them clearly that their behavior is wrong. Explain why. Send them to their room or to another place to “cool down” and relax. During this time don’t let them play with a favorite toy or read a book. Let them sit and think. This is a healthier

option not only for your children but also for you.

- Praise your children for good behavior instead of buying them material rewards. Give your children opportunities to learn to control their own lives and make their own decisions. For example, your children should learn that the answer “yes” is not always possible. Teach them to make intelligent, fair, and healthy choices and not to always expect rewards.

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This brochure was produced by the
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The contents of this brochure were
developed under a grant from the
Department of Education.

The contents do not necessarily represent
the policy of the Department of Education and you
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Federal Government.



BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR CHILDREN: COMMUNICATION AND DISCIPLINE

Center for Literacy

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Make an effort to build a positive relationship with your children. By teaching your children to communicate what they want clearly, to respect themselves and others, and to have expectations and goals, you are building a caring and trusting relationship with them.

- How can I talk, listen and behave towards my children to become closer to them?

COMMUNICATION

Teach your children how to listen and speak clearly, and how to respond honestly to your questions. This will help when you and your children have trouble communicating and understanding each other.

- Talk with your children and not “at” them. Don’t immediately tell your children that you are right without listening to what they have to say.
- Listen actively to your children by showing your interest, and looking at them when they speak.
- Respect your children as individuals. Don’t expect all your children to act or react in the same way in a given situation.
- Learn and care about the outside influences that your children experience in their daily lives, such as friends or school. Support them as they struggle to become individuals, apart from the group.
- Listen first. Don’t immediately judge your children when they have something important to say.

MODELING

By showing your children how to act in certain situations you can teach them valuable skills.

- Teach your children how to resolve conflict in their own lives by sharing with them how you deal with your own day to day problems.
- Teach your children how to respect others by interacting with your family members or friends in a respectful way.
- Teach your children how to listen by listening to them without interrupting while they speak.
- Show your children how to communicate clearly what they want by stating clearly what you ask of them. You are their model. Don’t expect them to behave differently from the way you do.

EXPECTATIONS

You can teach your children to achieve by expecting them to always try to be the best that they can be.

- Show interest in what your children like. For example, if they like animals, encourage that interest by taking them to the zoo or to the museum. Find books together about animals in the library.
- Speak honestly and clearly about what you expect your children. If you expect to finish their homework before they go out to play, encourage them to finish it. Don’t give up and allow them to go out before they have a chance to finish their work. Praise them after they complete it.

- Inspire your children to continue their education after high school, or to prepare for life beyond high school. For example, encourage them to go to college or to a trade school that will help them to prepare for their future.

HEALTH/SELF-IMAGE

There are ways to help your children feel good about themselves physically and mentally. You can encourage your children to feel good about themselves.

- Respond openly and honestly to questions that your children may ask about their body and personal life. If they are curious about the names and functions of their body, use the library or school resources to find books and pictures that can help them with explanations.
- Help your children develop a positive attitude and behavior toward good physical health.
- Make a habit of taking your children to the clinic for yearly check-ups or dental visits.
- Find out what your children learn at school about good health and relate it to your home life.
- Learn what “preventive” medicine means from your regular clinic, a community health program, or from your children’s school. For example, by making sure your children receive regular vaccinations at your clinic, you can avoid serious illnesses. You can also avoid the cost and the overuse of an emergency room visit.
- Stay calm if you suspect that your children have been sexually abused. First, assure them that it wasn’t their fault. Talk to your children, and