



Child Discipline— Parenting Problem Child Solved!

By Kelly Nault

What is the most frequently asked question about child-raising? Discipline!

Problem children can leave parents baffled, bewildered and burned out. Parents often attempt to lay down the law, but they experience varying degrees of success.

“What’s the most effective punishment?” parents want to know. Some even ask, “How can I show my kid that I’m boss?” Unfortunately, these are the parents who are frustrated time again when their child, after receiving punishment, retaliates even more or continually performs the same misbehavior that drives their parents nuts!

Why is it that some discipline doesn’t seem to work?

Punitive Discipline Leads to Greater Parenting Problems

There is a parenting discipline dilemma that is rampant across the nation. Yet, most parents don’t even know it really exists. Have you ever attempted to deal with a problem child or problem behavior only to have to deal with it again and again? Punitive discipline tends to only teach our children to not get caught next time! This dilemma is created by the following pattern:

Parents’ preferred modus operandi for child-raising: Discipline.

Parenting Problem: Child acts out in overt and covert ways the more frequently and harshly they are disciplined.

Is there a way to discipline that motivates children to actually want to be well behaved? Fortunately, there is. There is hope!

Using Consequences to Your Parenting Benefit

It's a simple, well-known law of nature: every action has a reaction—a consequence. And consequences can be one of the most powerful discipline tools you can use to encourage positive behavior in your children.

There are two basic kinds of consequences that are most helpful to moms and dads. These are:

1. Divine Intervention Consequences—

Commonly known as “natural consequences,” these consequences occur when Mother Nature is allowed to step in and take her course without interference. Some examples include:

- Your child is cold after deciding not to wear his jacket.
- Your child is hungry because she forgot her lunch.
- Your child is tired because he decided to stay up reading late last night.

2. Parenting Commonsense Consequences—

Also known as “logical consequences,” this type of consequence requires an intervention by you that is fair, kind and reasonable. The litmus test to ensure that a consequence makes common sense is to ask yourself, “If I applied this to a friend, would it seem reasonable to them?” Some examples include:

- Turning the TV off if the kids are fighting over which show they want to watch.
- Having your child clean up the mess she made.
- Taking your child immediately out of the bath when he is splashing water all over the bathroom.

Be Kind With Your Parenting Consequences

It's easy to fall into the trap of using consequences as punishment, especially with a child who frequently acts up. But as I discuss on pages 136–137 of my book *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You*, it's important that your consequences are kind and respectful.

Keep these steps in mind when using consequences:

1. Choose a “commonsense consequence” that is related to your child's behavior—

Grounding and taking away privileges are sometimes unrelated to the misbehavior. If your child is interrupting, forgets to do her chores, or has a temper tantrum in front of his friends, how does taking away TV time help? If your consequence is unrelated, a power struggle is likely to ensue. Instead, keep the consequence related to the misbehavior at hand.

2. Prepare your child for the commonsense consequence—Give your children fair warning, but only once. Respectfully tell them what you have decided to do, but don't remind them every five minutes. Nagging never gets results.

3. Follow through with your parenting consequences—Do what you said you were going to do. This is not the time for reminders, hints or "second chances." Chances only teach our children to not listen to us the first, second, and sometimes even the third time!

4. Evaluate—Be open to making small changes after you have experimented with it for at least one month. The key to success is that you stay kind, firm and consistent.

Parenting with Your Feet

Following through with parenting consequences doesn't require a lot of talk. Instead, I encourage parents to let their feet do most, if not all, of the talking. What do I mean by this?

Often, when parents are following through on a consequence, they will justify it or explain with words. Such justifications include:

1. "I told you I was going to _____ if you did _____."
2. "The reason you have to do _____ is because you did _____."
3. "If you had done _____ like I asked you to, you wouldn't have to do _____."

Instead of justifying or explaining, just take action. "Talk with your feet" by following through with the consequence, no explanations needed. As the old saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words," and this is nowhere more true than in the realm of parenting.

Parenting Success Key: Focus on the Benefits

Once you've eliminated parenting nagging, you can encourage positive behavior by focusing on the benefits of such behavior.

This is perhaps one of the top parenting tools of the trade. All that is required is awareness of your children's general daily routine—and what parts of that routine they like most.

For instance, if you want your children to clean up the game they were just playing, and yet you know they are already thinking about the next thing in their schedule—listening to their favorite music—you might say something like, "Before you go and enjoy your music, you get to put the game away."

(As a side note, notice the use of "get to" rather than "have to." Try to keep your tone positive, and you'll reap positive results!)

It's pretty much guaranteed that your children will say, "Can't we clean up later?" Simply continue to focus on the benefit. "The quicker you clean up, the quicker you will be able to enjoy

your music.”

Stay Positive When Parenting

When parenting gets rough, it's very tempting to come down harder and harder each time your child misbehaves. Yet it is important, especially with problem children, to encourage your children in good behavior, not discourage them with constant nagging. A good balance of commonsense consequences and focusing on the benefits will yield wonderful rewards.

Kelly Nault, MA corporate spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* inspires moms to put themselves first—for the sake of their children. She shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! Sign up for her free online parenting course at www.UltimateParenting.com.

You are free to print or publish this article provided the article and bio remain as written and include a link to www.UltimateParenting.com as shown above.

© 2006 www.UltimateParenting.Com. All rights reserved.

