

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Medford Township Public Schools
Elementary School Counselors

Guiding Students for School Success

Self-discipline is critical to your child's success in school & in life

The dreams you have for your child—and that he has for himself—depend, in part, on his self-discipline. Will he behave well? Will he get along with others? Will he be responsible? Will he overcome challenges?

To encourage self-discipline:

- **Set limits.** As your child grows, family rules will change. But they should match his age and abilities. Be sure to enforce key rules consistently. Otherwise your expectations will become confusing.
- **Be clear.** Instead of, “Clean your room,” say, “Make your bed and stack your blocks in the corner.” Explain possible results: “When you’re finished, we can leave for the park,” or “Toys left out are taken away for a day.”
- **Use consequences.** Kids learn from their successes and failures. Stick to rules you make. And let your child make minor decisions, even if you disagree with them. He might spend his allowance too quickly, for example, and learn from this mistake.
- **Solve problems.** Work through difficulties together. Avoid yelling and interrupting. Focus on respect and solutions. Meanwhile, give your child chances to solve problems himself, with your guidance when needed.
- **Be a role model.** You are your child's most important teacher. Show him exactly how you want him to act. Over time, you will see results.



Source: Ann Hamilton, “Raising Tomorrow's Adults: Teaching Children Self-Control and Self-Responsibility,” University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, <http://extension.unh.edu/family/documents/RTAConrl.htm>.

Face bullying problems bravely

Sometimes parents are afraid to report an incident of bullying. But if your child is the victim, it's important to get help.



Remember, if one child is being bullied, there are probably other victims, too. By working with the school, the problem should be solved.

Source: “How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children,” Stop Bullying Now, www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/HHS_PSA/pdfs/SBN_Tip_3.pdf.

Blowing a gasket over your child's behavior? Try this sanity-saving mantra: “My child isn't me. My child is his own person.” Accept that he is who he is and don't take his actions personally. By reminding yourself of this simple fact, you may be able to discipline him more fairly and effectively.



Source: Dr. Marvin Marshall, *Discipline without Stress, Punishments or Rewards*, ISBN: 0-9700606-1-0 (Piper Press, 1-800-606-6105, www.piperpress.com).

Do you discipline effectively?

When your child misbehaves, are the consequences reasonable? To find out, ask yourself whether they:

- **Are enforced right away** (or as soon as possible).
- **Relate to the misbehavior** itself.
- **Are age-appropriate.**
- **Are short enough.** This lets both you and your child move past the poor behavior and focus on the positives again.

Do your consequences hit these marks? Then chances are you're right on target when it comes to proper discipline!

Source: “Facts for Families: Discipline,” American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, www.aacap.org/page/ww?section=Facts+for+Families&name=Discipline.

Bad habits don't equal bad behaviors

There's no need to punish your youngster when she bites her nails, twirls her hair, etc. Her bad habit may be annoying, but it isn't really a discipline issue. In fact, the more you draw attention to a particular habit, the more likely you are to prolong it.

Your best course of action? Simply ignore her habit. Odds are she'll outgrow it on her own.

Source: Jacqueline Preston, “Children's Annoying Habits,” HealthLEADER, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, http://publicaffairs.uth.tmc.edu/hleader/archive/Infants_Toddlers/2004/annoyinghabits-0614.html.



Choose your expectations carefully

Here is a tough, but important, question: What behaviors do you expect of your child? Keep in mind that:

- **Expectations should be realistic.** Expecting too much of your child is harmful. Think about her strengths and how you can encourage them. Success builds confidence.
- **Communication is key.** Kids give signals when they're overwhelmed. For example, your child might complain about an activity if it's too much for her or if she needs help. ("I hate this book!" or "Ballet is dumb.")
- **Perfection is not the goal.** Teach your child to pace herself and speak up if she's in over her head. Problem solving and responsibility are more important than earning A's.



Source: Patricia Sullivan, "Great Expectations: What's the Best Way for Parents to Help Children Be Their Best," PTA, www.pta.org/archive_article_details_1118085001546.html.

Questions & Answers

Q: I get so frustrated with my child sometimes! If I don't sit with her while she works, she never seems to finish her assignments. I hate the idea of hovering over her, but I don't know what else to do. Any suggestions?

A: First, try to see things from her point of view. Does she really want your constant attention, or is she just nervous about making a mistake or doing her homework incorrectly? Or does she have trouble staying focused on the paper in front of her?

Whatever the reason, here are some ways to help your child become more self-sufficient when it's time to hit the books.

You can:

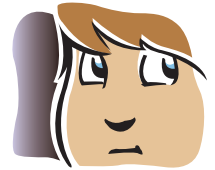
- **Talk to her ahead of time.** Before your child begins an assignment, ask her to tell you about it. Is she worried about the work? Which part does she think will be the easiest or most difficult?
- **Guide her out of the starting gate.** Do the first problem of her assignment with her. This may help her get her bearings. It'll also give her an example to refer back to later on.
- **Observe her.** As she continues working, stick around for a moment or two to watch. That way, you'll be able to see whether she understands the task at hand. If things seem okay, step back and let her work.
- **Check in on her.** Every so often, take a peek at how she's doing. Don't hover, but do let her know you're there for moral support (or to help keep her focused).



Source: Jan Baumel, M.S., "Dealing with Your Child's Frustrating Behavior," SchwabLearning.org, www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=297.

Why shaming your child is a real shame

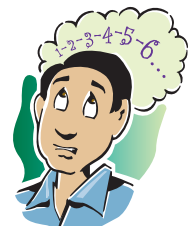
Do you use shame to discipline your child? Don't. By shaming him into behaving better, it's as if you're teaching him that he's basically "bad." And to be "good," he must behave in a certain way. Worse, humiliating him may even make him want to seek revenge—not change his behavior for the better.



Source: T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and Joshua D. Sparrow, M.D., *Discipline the Brazelton Way*, ISBN: 0-7382-0783-7 (Perseus Publishing, 212-340-8100, www.perseusbooksgroup.com).

Follow the 10-second rule

It's vital to correct your child's poor behavior quickly, but not too quickly. That is, don't lay into him if you're still fuming about neglected homework or missing an assignment deadline. Instead, give yourself a short breather. Use this tried-and-true method: Count to 10—before dealing with him. It may keep you from doing something you'll regret.



Source: "How to Teach Good Behavior: Tips for Parents," American Academy of Family Physicians, www.aafp.org/afp/20021015/1463ph.html.

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