

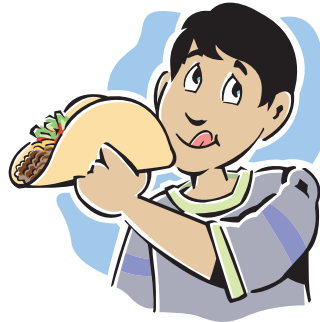
Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Medford Township Public Schools
Elementary School Counselors

Guiding Students for School Success

Build character & respect with everyday activities

Teaching children character requires more than sitting down and discussing it. It involves *living* with character. Although this is serious business, you can make it fun, too! Here's how:

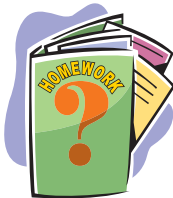


- **Respect differences.** Show your interest in other cultures and ways of life. Try new kinds of food and music with your child.
- **Be generous.** Find ways to donate time or items to charity. Discuss how it feels to give. Consider why people say, "It's better to give than to receive."
- **Choose honesty.** When you are honest, it's easier for your child to be trustworthy, too. Tell the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Talk about its meaning.
- **Role-play.** Ask your child to act out a sticky situation. For example, "Your friend asks if you like her new haircut. You're not sure. What can you say? Could you avoid lying?"
- **Work hard.** When you and your child face an unappealing task, set a timer. Agree to make progress during that time. See how much you can accomplish!
- **Make decisions.** Weigh options as a family, such as where to go out for dinner. List pros and cons. Help your child practice thinking things through. Ask for his opinion.

Source: "Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/citizen/citizen.pdf.

Request advice about homework

Homework time can be a discipline challenge. Parents are often confused about how involved to be.



If that's how you feel, ask the teacher for guidelines. "Should I help my child with homework?" "How much?" "Do you want me to correct mistakes with her?"

You will find that different teachers may have different approaches.

Your child is screaming for another cookie after you've already said *no*. You hand him one to keep the peace. No harm done, right? Wrong!



You may have bought five minutes of quiet, but you've set yourself up for future battles. You've just shown him that fussing works—if he screams long enough, he'll get what he wants. A better strategy? Make *no* mean *no*.

Form a parent-teacher discipline team

If your child acts up at school, let him face the music at home, too. That is, show him that you and his teacher are on the same team. For example, if he disrupts the class, the penalties shouldn't stop when he steps off the bus.

Try taking away some TV time or tonight's dessert. He may just get the message that you take his misbehavior seriously—*wherever* it occurs!



"A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started."
—Abraham Lincoln

You like me! You really like me!



Of course you want your child to like you, but that's no reason to cave in to her every whim. The reality is that there will be times when she's not crazy about you.

Think of how she balks when you make her do her homework or go to bed before midnight. Accept this reality and you'll be better able to discipline her firmly and fairly.

Source: Maggie Mamen, *The Pampered Child Syndrome*, ISBN: 1-84310-407-5 (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1-866-416-1078, www.jkp.com).

Use TV time wisely

According to experts, television is a major influence on today's kids. To monitor TV's effects, set limits on:

- **Time.** Choose reading, playing and family activities over TV. They are better ways to use your time.
- **Ads.** Many commercials are for unhealthy products. While kids sit around and watch TV, they may see confusing messages about food and other subjects.
- **Violence.** Children should not watch violent shows. This applies even if "good" characters use violence.

Keep in mind that all TV isn't bad. Many shows teach helpful lessons. So limit TV to one or two *educational* hours a day.

Source: "Television and the Family," American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/family/tv1.htm.



Discipline is a long, long road

When it comes to disciplining your child, it's easy to lapse into a "Do this, don't do that" mode.



But remember: Discipline is a long, important process. It's not about quick fixes and it's not about punishing your child.

Discipline is about molding her into a responsible person with self-control. So be patient. Like any process, it takes time!

Source: Dr. Sal Severe, "Dr. Sal's Top 12 Parenting Tips," HowtoBehave.com, www.howtobehave.com/topten.html.

Questions & Answers

Q: I try to pick my battles when it comes to disciplining my child, but all of her misbehavior seems battle-worthy! How can I decide what's worth arguing over and what isn't?

A: With misbehavior, it can be tough to separate the truly bad from the annoying but harmless. When gauging your child's behavior, try using the five D's. Ask yourself whether what she's doing is:

1. **Dangerous.** Could her actions hurt her or someone else? For example, is she hitting her little brother?
2. **Destructive.** Will something get broken if she keeps it up? Is she tossing a ball right next to the spinning ceiling fan?
3. **Disruptive.** Are her actions interrupting those around her? Is she acting up while in a restaurant?
4. **Disgusting.** Is she doing something disrespectful? Does she pick her nose or use foul language?
5. **Developmentally inappropriate.** Is she behaving like a child half her age? Does she throw tantrums when things don't go her way?



Now that you've rated your child's behavior, it's time to figure out what to do about it. Clearly, if she's doing something dangerous or destructive, you need to step in.

But for the other types of behavior—disruptive, disgusting or developmentally inappropriate—you should weigh the benefits of "going into battle."

If her actions are truly bothersome (if the teacher says she's disruptive in the classroom), she must be disciplined. But if she's just being mildly annoying, it may be worth ignoring the behavior—at least at first. If it continues, step in with appropriate discipline.

Source: Meme Hieneman, Karen Childs and Jane Sergay, *Parenting with Positive Behavior Support*, ISBN: 1-55766-865-5 (Paul H. Brookes, 1-800-638-3775, www.brookespublishing.com).

Simmering down can mean slimming down

Need one more reason not to come down too hard on your child? It could be bad for his waistline.

Research shows that too-strict parents are much more likely than more sensitive moms and dads to have overweight children. In other words, being reasonable with your child may not just improve his behavior—it may improve his health!

Source: "Yelling Makes Your Kids Fat," *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2006, The Washington Post Company, 202-334-6000, www.washingtonpost.com.

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