

The “3 F’s” of Effective Parenting

Firm: Consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when the inappropriate behavior occurs.

Fair: The punishment should fit the crime. Also in the case of recurring behavior, consequences should be stated in advance so the child knows what to expect. Harsh punishment is not necessary. Using a simple time-out can be effective when it is used consistently every time the behavior occurs. Also, use of reward for a period of time like part of a day or a whole day when no time-outs or maybe only one time-out is received.

Friendly: Use a friendly but firm communication style when letting children know they have behaved inappropriately and let them know they will receive the “agreed upon” consequence. Encourage them to try to remember what they should do instead to avoid future consequences. Work at “catching them being good” and praise them for appropriate behavior.

The Parent as Teacher/Coach

See your role as that of a teacher or coach to your children. Demonstrate in detail how you would like them to behave.

- Try to set aside time on a regular basis to do something fun with your children.
- Rather than tell them what not to do, teach and show them what they *should* do.
- Use descriptive praise when they do something well. Say, “I like how you ____ when you ____.” Be specific.
- Help your child learn to express how he/she feels. Say, “You seem frustrated,” “How are you feeling?” “Are you upset?” “You look like you are angry about that.” “It’s OK to feel that way.”
- Try to see a situation the way your children do. Listen carefully to them. Try to form a mental picture of how it would look to them.
- Use a soft, confident tone of voice to redirect them when they are upset.
- Be a good listener: Use good eye contact. Physically get down to the level of smaller children. Do not interrupt. Ask open-ended questions rather than questions that can be answered with a yes or no. Repeat back to them what you heard.
- Make sure they understand directions. Have them repeat them back.
- When possible give them choices of when and how to comply with a request.
- Look for gradual changes in behavior. Don’t expect too much. Praise behavior that is coming closer to the desired goal.
- Develop a nonverbal sign (gesture) that your children will accept as a signal that they are being inappropriate and need to change their behavior. This helps them to respond to your prompt without getting upset.