



Polk/Burnett Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Newsletter

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Disciplining Your Grandchildren

You disciplined your own children and that was hard enough. Now you have to discipline your grandchildren, and things seem even more complicated. Why is "time out" in and why is spanking out?

Instilling discipline in children is no easy task - both grandparents and parents often find themselves baffled over the best way to do it. Although children respond differently to various methods of discipline, the following guidelines can improve your chances of bringing about positive behavior changes in children of all ages. The following tips may help you be better at disciplining your grandchildren:

- **Be Consistent** - Children, especially when they are very young, behave better when their lives generally are consistent. Punishing a certain behavior one day and letting it go the next day confuses them. Be consistent with your grandchildren about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
- **Communicate and Educate** - Talk with your grandchildren. If you are taking the grandkids to dinner or on an outing, tell them ahead of time what sort of behavior you expect in public places. Make it clear that you will not tolerate bad behavior.

Children of all ages need adults to establish boundaries within which they are expected to function. Otherwise they will set out to constantly test the limits.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the aim of discipline is education. When you discipline children, you are teaching them how to exhibit self-control, how to respect themselves and others, how to ensure their own safety, and the difference between right and wrong.

Remember, the way you talk with children is just as important as what you say. Don't humiliate them or use a nasty

tone of voice. Try to use straightforward language and a matter-of-fact tone. Yelling can signal to children that you are losing control, and you want to maintain authority.

Encourage your grandchildren to communicate with you, too. Talking a problem behavior out might offer insights into why they are misbehaving, which can help you figure out how better to address the problem. Helping your grandchildren use words to express their feelings also can dispel bad behavior. For younger children, talking might distract them from undesirable actions, such as throwing something or hitting someone.

- **Be Patient** - You might need to correct misbehavior many times before your grandchildren learn not to repeat it, especially if they are very young, very stubborn, or both. Rewarding them for good behavior might help achieve positive results more quickly.
- **Stay in Control** - Not only can hitting and yelling scare children, it shows them that you have lost control of the situation. It also can teach them to use these methods themselves. Demonstrating your own good behavior and self-control when conflicts arises teaches children to do the same. Interacting with other adults and with your grandchildren in a calm, constructive, controlled manner - even when they misbehave and upset you - sets a good example. You can be a role model for your grandchildren even with the way you discipline them.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians advise against spanking and other forms of physical punishments because they become less effective over time, set a bad example, and can encourage aggressive behavior in children.

- **Allow Time To Cool Off** - If you find your grandchildren's behavior has made you very angry, give yourself time to cool off before you react. Allow your grandchildren time to collect themselves as well. Disciplinary action or words are wasted on children who are agitated or distracted by anger. A "time out" can provide some necessary time and space for both adults and children to calm down, distance themselves from the immediate situation, and put things in perspective.

During a time out, children go to a quiet place along, such as a chair in a room where there are no interesting or fun distractions, for a short period of time.

A 5-year old should have a 5-minute time-out. A more positive solution is likely to follow such a cooling off period.

Whether it's grounding a teenager or putting a toddler in time-out, make the punishment fit the crime and administer it with lots of love.

Sources:

Positive Parenting, a Video-Based Parent Education Curriculum, Minnesota Extension Service, 1995

Positive Parenting: Tips on Discipline, Children's Trust Fund, Madison, Wisconsin, revised 2000.

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Websites:

<http://www.AARP.org/getans/grandparents.html>

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent>

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/view.html>

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