

Tools of Discipline

1. Choices

A child is given two or more choices which make him feel in control. The rule when using choices is that you have to be satisfied with which ever choice the child makes. Therefore, both choices must be acceptable to you. For example: You may wear the red shorts or the blue ones. You may have cheerios or pancakes for breakfast. You may clean your room or the family room first. Would you rather read a book or color a picture? Would you rather stop crying and come and play with us or take your crying to the bedroom? Sometimes a child will not make a choice and then by default they have made the choice to not choose and you can make the choice for them.

2. Gaiting

This is a process that creates win-win. It will only work if the child has a "hot button", or something that he wants to do. You must remain in control and use it in a spirit of love and excitement. You want the child will be able to do whatever it is that they want to do after they have done what they are responsible for. Privileges are earned and are not a right. This works very well with teens as well as little people. For example: When your toys are picked up you may watch TV. You may go to the game Saturday night if your room is clean. You may go outside and ride your bike when the dishwasher is unloaded. You may play 1 hour of game boy on Saturday if you do your jobs every day with a good attitude. This does not work with a child that does not want something.

3. Practice

This is based on the principle that anything that we practice we become better at. This must be used with complete control and not anger. If you are angry, it becomes punishment instead of discipline. For example: One Sunday I was not happy with the way my children acted in Church. On the way home, in a very happy voice, I told them that I wanted them to all meet in the family room as soon as we got home. When we were all there, I told them about practice and that if we wanted to play the piano we would have to practice to become good. If we wanted to play basketball we would have to practice to become good. I then told them that if we wanted to do well in Church we would have to practice. We talked about how we should behave in Church and then I told them we would practice for a minute. They tried and did not make it so we did it for 90 seconds. They did pretty well. The next week as we drove to Church I reminded them about how we had practiced and that I knew they would do well in Church. As the meeting wore on, some of them were getting restless. I leaned out and just mouthed the words, "Do you want to practice when we get home?" They sat back and became quiet

again. This can be used for hanging up coats, shutting doors softly, saying things in the right tone of voice i.e. not whining, making a bed correctly. Practice is a great tool but must be used only when you are emotionally in control.

4. Family Meetings:

These are meetings where problems in the family can be discussed without pointing fingers at anyone. The problem is addressed as an issue and not as an investigation to accuse someone. I would recommend that this meeting is not held in conjunction with a family home evening. When they are held together the evening becomes too long for little people and they lose all interest. These are problem solving meetings or meetings to plan fun activities. It is when the whole family sits together to learn how to problem solve. When one child comes tattling on someone else that they never pick up their part of the room—you can say well put that on the agenda for the family meeting. Post an agenda where family members can write items that they want discussed in the family meeting. Many times when faced with that offer they will go and resolve the problem themselves. If the item does make it to the family meeting it needs to be discussed with respect for all the parties involved. The aim of the meeting is to find solutions—it is to look forward to what we will do about something and how we will record progress.

5. Make-ups:

This is the principle that when we offend someone, we need to do something to show that we are sorry. Too often when two children are fighting we help them resolve the conflict by refereeing it and then tell them to, "say you are sorry". The child will do it, but the feeling does not change. To say the words does not mean the emotion has changed. The words need to be followed by an act of service to show that the words have meaning. For example: Your husband says he will be home at a certain time. You are expecting him and counting on him. He is late and gives you a very truthful reason about why he is late—you know it is the truth and you say, "that's okay" but in your heart you are still unhappy. Now if he comes home and tells you the same story and says he is sorry and gives you a single rose and says he loves you. You accept the apology on a feeling level. The act of service tells you that his words have meaning. We need to use this to help our children be able to learn to forgive and let go of negative feelings for one another.

6. Non-verbal communication:

This is a great way to get children to do what they need to do. Most of us talk too much and that makes our children frustrated and discouraged. This is a tool to help us, as parents, get away from the lecture that will not do any good anyway. Before it can be used, the child needs to know what it is that he is supposed to do. For example: we

have told our children that they need to do their homework before they can watch TV after school. Instead of lecturing and reminding them, you can put a sheet over the TV with a piece of paper with a happy smiley face pinned to the sheet. You can write a note on a bathroom mirror that says, "This bathroom needs some tender loving care". You can notes of appreciation and put them in a child's lunch or a big smiley face on a bedroom door that says, "Good job, this room looks great." I used to raise my eyebrow at my children when they were doing something that they were not supposed to do. It became a joke with them that they had better watch out because mom was raising "the brow". It was fun and yet they knew that when I did it, I wanted them to change what they were doing. It worked very well in church.

7. Putting the children in the same boat:

Many times we come upon two children fighting and we have not seen where it started. Both of them want the other one to be in trouble. It is just one word against another. Truly they are both partly to blame for engaging in fighting. Instead of allowing them to blame one another and justifying themselves, you need to stop trying to find where the fault began and just treat them the same. They can clean a sliding glass door with one on each side so they can learn how to work together. You may want them each to decide what kind thing they can do for the other. You may want them both to go without game boy for a day. This is especially good when one child is a habitual tattler. If they have to have the same consequence and the one they are tattling on, it is not as rewarding as it was before.

8. Natural consequences:

A natural consequence is the natural result of an action. It usually does not work because we cannot stand to see our children suffer so we lecture and then rescue them. The natural consequence of forgetting ones lunch is to go hungry at school. The natural consequence of staying up too late is being tired the next day, (not being able to sleep in late). The natural consequence of spending all your money is that when your friends go to the movie, you do not get to go. In order to use this effectively, the parent must be willing to let the consequence play itself out and NOT lecture at all. The lesson is lost if the parent can not have empathy. It is hard to allow our children to learn lessons that seem difficult at the time when we know that we could rescue them and make them feel better. The problem is that they do not learn and then we have to rescue them from bigger and bigger problems. It is better to allow them to learn from their mistakes when the problems are small rather than make life easy for them early on and then see them suffer when the problems become big.

9. Logical consequences:

A consequence that is imposed on a child because of behavior. There are several guidelines that need to be used in order for this tool to be effective. First: the consequence must be related to the incident. Second: the consequence must be respectful of both the parent and the child's feelings. Third: the consequence must have reasonable terms. If logical consequences are used in anger, they become punishment and they do not teach a principle. The purpose of a consequence is to teach and help a child remember so he will not make the same mistake again. Every time a child misbehaves, he does not need to have a consequence, he may only need to do the task over. For example, if he does not make his bed properly, he may just need to make it again. He does not need to stay in from playing all day.

10. Time out:

This tool is used by many parents but it is often used as a punishment instead of a method of teaching correct behavior. Time removed from the social setting should be a time for the child to gain control of himself so he can be taught. When a child is angry or upset he does not have the emotional ability to learn what he has done wrong nor how to do it right. He needs to be removed from the situation so he can gain control of himself. That may be for a time as short as a minute or it may need to be longer. The goal is that he can settle down enough for you to teach him. Time out loses its effect if it is not followed by teaching time. After a child comes back you must help him know what was wrong with his behavior and how to correct it. Then most importantly that you love him and want him back in the social setting.

11. Distract or change direction:

This is a tool to redirect the attention or energy of a child. It is most commonly used with small children when they seem to want to do something that they should not. For example when a baby keeps pulling your glasses off your face, you distract them with an appropriate toy. It can also be used when you see one child start to annoy another one so you say (without any lecture or reprimand) "why don't you come and help me make brownies for dinner tonight?" It is easier to change the direction of energy than to stop it and try to restart it in a positive way. When my boys were young and would start to wrestle in the family room, I would tell them to go outside to the basketball court and make three baskets to redirect their energy.

12. Questions:

When a child has done something wrong we usually feel a need to lecture and tell them why they are wrong. This will never prompt meekness and change because the child feels attacked even if he knows what he has done is not right. It is an art to be able to

ask questions that will lead the child to come to the right answers by himself. When the right ideas come from within himself, he is much more willing to follow through and do it than when the right answers come in the form of a lecture. Questions like: "How did that make you feel?" "What do you think is the right thing to do?" "How do you think your sister feels?" "What do you think we should do about this?" "Do you have any good ideas how this could have been handled differently?" "What do you think the consequences of that choice might be?" "I know you were angry and you probably had a good reason to be, but how do you think you could have handled it differently?" The object of using questions is to get the child to do the thinking and talking. This helps principles be better internalized by the child.

13. Role Playing:

This is a tool to allow children to practice the dialogue they need in dealing with different situations. In the beginning you will probably need to walk them through the entire dialogue. Have each child take the other's part and play it. This is useful in allowing them to understand someone else's perspective. Be careful that you are not making fun of the child or being sarcastic in role playing.

14. Teach them how to Apologize Properly:

This is a tool that teaches proper behavior. There are 4 steps for a true apology. 1. Say "I am sorry for..." be very specific. 2. Say "This is wrong because..." be very specific. 3. Say "In the future I will..." Be very specific. Make sure it is a 'positive' statement. A statement of 'I will...' instead of 'I won't...' 4. Ask "Will you forgive me?" The other child has the agency to forgive or not to forgive. This gives the person apologizing a chance to look at how the other person felt. It teaches empathy. See Article... ["A Better Way To Say Sorry"](#)

Final tips on discipline:

- Incorporate positive physical contact when using discipline tools
- Share your personal experiences so they know you have faced challenges when you were young
- Be sure they always feel loved
- Kneel in prayer with your child for guidance and help with personal problems
- It is a faulty notion that if you make a child feel badly about their behavior, they will be willing to change. Change is not wrought by misery, but rather by love. Discipline is grounded in love. Punishment is founded on power and a desire to get even.