

# Positive Discipline

## GUIDELINES



From the book *Positive Discipline*, by Jane Nelsen

- 1** *Misbehaving children are “discouraged children”* who have mistaken ideas on how to achieve their **primary goal—to belong**. Their mistaken ideas lead them to misbehavior. We cannot be effective unless we address the mistaken beliefs rather than just the misbehavior.
- 2** Use **encouragement** to help children feel “belonging” so the motivation for misbehaving will be eliminated. Celebrate each step in the direction of improvement rather than focusing on mistakes.
- 3** A great way to help children feel encouraged is to **spend special time** “being with them.” Many teachers have noticed a dramatic change in a “problem child” after spending five minutes simply sharing what they both like to do for fun.
- 4** When tucking children into bed, ask them to **share with you** their “saddest time” during the day and their “happiest time” during the day. Then **you share with them**. You will be surprised what you learn.
- 5** Have **family meetings** or **class meetings** to solve problems with cooperation and mutual respect. This is the key to creating a loving, respectful atmosphere while helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.
- 6** Give children **meaningful jobs**. In the name of expediency, many parents and teachers do things that children could do for themselves and one another. **Children feel belonging when they know they can make a real contribution**.
- 7** **Decide together** what jobs need to be done. Put them all in a jar and let each child draw out a few each week; that way no one is stuck with the same jobs all the time. Teachers can invite children to help them make class rules and list them on a chart titled, “We decided.” Children have ownership, motivation, and enthusiasm when they are included in the decisions.
- 8** **Take time for training**. Make sure children understand what “clean the kitchen” means to you. To them it may mean simply putting the dishes in the sink. Parents and teachers may ask, “What is your understanding of what is expected?”
- 9** **Teach and model mutual respect**. One way is to **be kind and firm at the same time**—kind to show respect for the child, and firm to show respect for yourself and “the needs of the situation.” This is difficult during conflict, so use the next guideline whenever you can.
- 10** Proper **timing** will improve your effectiveness tenfold. It does not “work” to deal with a problem at the time of conflict—emotions get in the way. Teach children about **cooling-off periods**. You (or the children) can go to a separate room and do something to make yourself feel better—and then work on the problem with mutual respect.
- 11** **Get rid of the crazy idea that in order to make children do better, first you have to make them feel worse**. Do you feel like doing better when you feel humiliated? This suggests a whole new look at “time out.”
- 12** **Use Positive Time Out**. Let your children help you design a pleasant area (cushions, books, music, stuffed animals) that will help them feel better. Remember that children do better when they feel better. Then you can ask your children, when they are upset, “Do you think it would help you to take some positive time out?”
- 13** Punishment may “work” if all you are interested in is stopping misbehavior for “the moment.” Sometimes we must **beware of what works** when the long-range results are negative—resentment, rebellion, revenge, or retreat.
- 14** Teach children that **mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn!** A great way to teach children that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn is to model this yourself by using the Three Rs of Recovery after you have made a mistake:
  - (1) **Recognize your mistake.**
  - (2) **Reconcile: Be willing to say “I’m sorry, I didn’t like the way I handled that.”**
  - (3) **Resolve: Focus on solutions rather than blame.** (#3 is effective only if you do #1 & #2 first.)
- 15** Focus on **solutions** instead of **consequences**. Many parents and teachers try to disguise punishment by calling it a logical consequence. Get children involved in finding solutions that are:
  - (1) **Related**
  - (2) **Respectful**
  - (3) **Reasonable**
  - (4) **Helpful**
- 16** **Make sure the message of love and respect gets through**. Start with “I care about you. I am concerned about this situation. Will you work with me on a solution?”
- 17** **Have fun!** Bring joy into homes and classrooms.

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# DEVELOPING CAPABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

From the book *Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World* by H. Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelsen

## Seven Strategies for Developing Capable Young People

- 1 Recognize** that the rate and intensity with which knowledge, technology, and lifestyle are changing have created conditions in which resiliency and personal resources are critical to effective living and learning.
- 2 Encourage** the development of seven resources of highly resilient and capable people:
  - a. **Strong perceptions of personal capabilities.** “I am capable of facing problems and challenges and gaining strength and wisdom through experience.”
  - b. **Strong perceptions of significance.** “My life has meaning and purpose, and I contribute in unique and meaningful ways.”
  - c. **Strong perceptions of personal influence over life.** “I can influence what I do in life and am accountable for my actions and choices.”
  - d. **Strong intrapersonal skills.** The ability to manage personal emotions through self-assessment, self-control, and self-discipline.
  - e. **Strong interpersonal skills.** The ability to communicate, cooperate, negotiate, share, empathize, listen, and work effectively with people.
  - f. **Strong systemic skills.** The ability to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility, and integrity.
  - g. **Strong judgmental skills.** The ability to make decisions based on moral and ethical principles, wisdom, and understanding.
- 3 Provide** opportunities in homes and classrooms for children to develop the significant seven. Strategies such as family/class meetings, mentoring, and firmness with dignity and respect can provide opportunities for children to develop all of these resources.
- 4 Create and use** rituals, traditions, and service projects as opportunities for growth and empowerment for children.
- 5 Increase the use** of dialogue (a meaningful exchange of ideas and perceptions) as the essential process for encouraging closeness, trust, and learning: “What are your thoughts about that?” **Avoid** “Did you? Can you? Will you? Won’t you? Is everything okay?” etc. Instead **use** What? How? When? In what way \_\_\_\_\_?” etc.

- 6 Build closeness** and trust, and convey respect by avoiding the **Five Barriers** and using the **Five Builders** instead:

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- Barrier #1: Assuming:** Acting on limiting assumptions about what a person can or can’t do, say, think, etc. “I didn’t tell you because you always get upset.” “You always think \_\_\_\_.” “You’re too young to try that!” etc.
- Builder #1: Checking:** Giving people a clean slate: “How do you want to deal with this?” “What are your thoughts about \_\_\_\_?” “What will you need to have ready for \_\_\_\_?” etc.
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- Barrier #2: Rescuing/Explaining:** Problem solving for a person: “\_\_\_\_ is what is happening.” “\_\_\_\_ is why it is happening.” “\_\_\_\_ is how to deal with it.” “Do it this way.” etc.
- Builder #2: Exploring:** Problem solving with a person by letting them try something and then asking: “What did you experience in that situation?” “Why is that significant?” “How might you apply what you have learned in the future?” etc.
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- Barrier #3: Directing:** Telling people what to do: “Pick up your shoes.” “Put that away.” “Don’t forget your lunch.” “Be sure and \_\_\_\_.” Etc.
- Builder #3: Inviting:** Asking for participation/assistance: “I would appreciate any help you could give me in straightening up the room.” “How do you plan to \_\_\_\_?” “What will you need to do in order to \_\_\_\_?” etc.
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- Barrier #4: Expecting: (too much too soon)** Using potential as a standard and discounting people for not being there already: “I was expecting this room to be spotless.” “You should know that already.” “I appreciate \_\_\_\_ but you forgot \_\_\_\_.” etc.
- Builder #4: Celebrating:** Focusing on effort progress and/or what was gained by trying: “I appreciate the effort you have made to clean up this room.” “What did you learn from trying to do that?” “What progress do you see yourself making?” etc.
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- Barrier #5: Adultisms:** Using stereotypes when dealing with people: “Teenagers are like that.” “You know better than that! Surely you realize!” “You are too young to appreciate that.” “Grow-up!” “Why are you so childish.” etc.
- Builder #5: Respect:** Allowing for people’s uniqueness and individuality: “What is your perception of \_\_\_\_?” or “Let me check out what you think.” “How do you see this issue?” etc.
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- 7 Improve** your relationships 100% by avoiding the **Five Barriers**. Where can you get that kind of return for doing less? Replace the Barriers with the **Builders** and double the positive impact of your contributions!

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