



CHILDREN'S  
AID SOCIETY  
of TORONTO

LA SOCIÉTÉ  
DE L'AIDE à  
L'ENFANCE  
DE TORONTO



# Positive Discipline

## What's Safe? What's Acceptable? What's Not? What Works?

### What Does Positive Parenting Look Like?

Positive parenting reinforces the values you want your child to learn, without using physical punishment. Parents can use positive discipline, which involves defining acceptable behaviour and reasonable consequences for kids that break the rules. Discipline gives children the structure they need to take control and become responsible for their behaviour.

### Provide Structure

Parents need to provide structure in order to parent effectively. A Family Service Worker at The Children's Aid Society of Toronto, is part of a team that helps families do that. Problems occur when there's no clear structure, no consistency in discipline children feel safe and secure when they know what to expect from their parents. If parents are consistent, children understand that no means no- not maybe.

We also help parents manage behaviour instead of emotions. Parents need to be able to put away their feelings of frustration or upset and address the behaviour that's causing all those emotions in the first place.

### Be Reasonable

Although structure and routine is key, balance is also important. Parents shouldn't be too rigid or too flexible. If it's your child's birthday and she's grounded, you should consider waiving her

punishment for the day and resuming the grounding the next day. And as with anything related to parenting, you must look at a child's development, to see if they may have an emotional or learning disorder that explains the challenging behaviour.

Something as simple as positive language can go a long way toward setting boundaries. Don't focus on the negative. Parents must set targets, give positive feedback and always redirect the negative behaviour into positive reinforcement. Try saying yes, instead of starting each answer with no. If your child wants ice cream before dinner, say 'yes, you may have ice cream after dinner.'

### What is acceptable?

### What is discipline?

### What is punishment?

Positive discipline is a loving way to teach your child. It is a necessary part of your relationship with your child and teaches children self-control and socially acceptable behaviour.

Punishment including physical punishment is not discipline. Punishment uses control, force and physical pain to get children to behave differently. It is an ineffective way of teaching your children and can be very damaging to your child's emotional and psychological well-being. Our work has shown us that many children who were punished as children grow up to become abusive to their children and their family as an adult. Physical punishment of babies is also unacceptable.

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Handling babies roughly - whether in anger or playfulness - is extremely dangerous. Shaking can cause serious injury, including brain damage, blindness and even death.

Physical injuries caused by a parent or caregiver may be considered abuse under the Child and Family Services Act in Ontario and require a Children's Aid Society investigation.

## What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse is any deliberate physical force or action (usually by a parent or caregiver) that results, or could result, in injury to a child. It can include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. In our work,

we often see situations of physical punishment that has gone out of control. Physical punishment can easily lead to physical abuse when parents or caregivers lose control and strike their children in anger. If you're frequently angry or frustrated by your child's behaviour, learning different ways to handle the situation can help you and your child.

## Help is available

Nobody is perfect. If you need help, ask for it. Free confidential information about parenting and services in your community is available from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto by calling **416-924-4646**.

For more information please call The Children's Aid Society of Toronto at **416-924-4646** or [inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca](mailto:inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca)

[www.TorontoCAS.ca](http://www.TorontoCAS.ca)