

TODAY'S FUTURE

Family Communication

Family members need to practice positive communications.

Positive communication smooths out the bumps in the road and is

- respectful,
- open,
- honest,
- straight-forward and kind.

Teach Your Child to Make Good Choices

An important aspect of discipline is teaching your child to think for himself. A child who can think for himself is on his way to being a competent, responsible adult. Begin early allowing your child to make appropriate choices. Young children can choose between two different shirts. Older children can choose if they want to have their snack first or do their homework first. Help your child think through choices. If your older child is deciding between snack and homework, you could help him think out loud which order seems right to him. Help him explain his choice and thinking to you.

Include children in family decisions, when appropriate. If the family is planning an outing, ask the children for ideas.

When your child is not following a family rule, talk with him about the choice he is making. What are the consequences of his choice? How will it affect him and other family members?

Praise your child when he solves his own problems. Focus on his solution and how it worked for him. "What a good idea! Now both you and your sister can have a chance to use the bike."

Lying, Stealing, and Other Problem Behaviors

All children - at some point - behave badly. If your child has stolen, lied, hit, or disobeyed in some way, he is no different from other children. Although these behaviors can be distressing, they do not mean that you have a bad, naughty, or hopeless child. What these behaviors do mean is that we have an opportunity to teach our child how we want him to behave and why these types of behaviors are not appropriate or acceptable. It is important to think of your child as different from his behaviors. Your child can be a good kid and still do bad things. Stay calm when dealing with a child who has misbehaved. When a parent is able to stay calm, the child is better able to hear what is said. If you do yell, be sure to repeat your message later when you are calm.

Deal with the behavior and do not get distracted by why your child did it. Children, like adults, do things for many reasons. Your child may never be able to tell you "why" he lied, stole, or disobeyed. Focusing on this will likely only frustrate you further because it will feel as if the child is being even more defiant.

Remember that love builds the foundation for effective discipline. If you want your children to obey family rules, regularly let them know how much you love and appreciate them. Instead, focus on the behavior and what it is you want to teach your child. If your child took something that was not his, you may want to consider having him return it to the person or store. This will teach your child how to make amends and will send a strong message about not taking things from others. Remember it often takes many failures to learn a lesson.

You will likely have to teach your children many times what you want them to do. What is important is that you teach the lesson each time, and hold them responsible for making amends. Failing is just another chance to learn. In the US, we tend to think that failing is bad – but it is probably the best way we learn anything. Be a role model for picking yourself up, dusting yourself off and starting all over again.

Remember to praise your child when he makes an effort to behave appropriately. If your child

has been lying and then tells you the truth, make sure to point this out. "I know it was hard for you to tell me that you broke the chair. I am really proud of you for being honest. Now what do you think we should do?"

If you are feeling overwhelmed by your child's behavior, seek help. Some good places to start looking for help are with your family doctor, school counselor, and church.

Source: Extension Spotlight on Families, Lisa Poppe, UNL Extension Educator

Some Basic Tips for Gardeners Working with Kids

Young kids have a very short attention span. Make sure that you have lots of options available so they can get started immediately and stay busy. Digging holes is one thing that seems to hold endless fascination.

Instant gratification helps a lot. Plant radishes even if you don't like them—they come up in three or four days.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Never tell kids something you could show them.

Growing their own will generally get kids to try eating things they otherwise wouldn't try.

GETTING DIRTY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF GROWING UP.

Your role should be as facilitator, rather than as a leader who imposes direction. Be a good model.

When giving out supplies to several kids, try to keep seeds, tools, etc. as similar as possible to avoid the inevitable squabbles.

After an activity, do something to reinforce what everyone has learned. Talk about what went on, who did what, who saw what. If you can, have them write things down or draw pictures.

Many kids who won't talk in a large group will often speak easily in a small group.

When working with older kids (past about 13), one-to-one works better than groups, since gardening (and anything else that could get you dirty) is a remarkably un-cool and disgusting way to spend time. Try to add responsibility and ownership to projects. ("Quincy is in charge of the wheelbarrow today.") Try pairing up older kids with younger ones. Rest assured that if you give them a healthy respect for gardens and green things when they are young, it will stay with them throughout their lives.

Children are very sensitive to lead poisoning and should take these precautions when working in the garden.

Information originally provided by the American Community Gardening Association.

