

# PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

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## Behaviour Management - Consequences

### REMEMBER:

- *It is your role as a parent to help your children manage their behaviour.*
- *Encourage independence.*
- *Be consistent.*
- *Separate the deed from the doer.*
- *Natural and logical consequences help children learn about their own behaviour.*
- *Offer children opportunities to show you that they have learned & know what to do.*

Helping children to learn to manage their behaviour is a key responsibility of every parent and carer. Using natural and logical consequences teaches them the impact that their behaviour has on the outcome of a range of situations.

One of the ways often used to discipline children is to reward them when they obey and punish them when they disobey.

The “reward and punishment” approach has its disadvantages, particularly with older children and adolescents.

- It makes parents responsible for their children’s behaviour
- It prevents children from learning to make their own decisions and, consequently, from adopting rules for effective behaviour.

An alternative method is called “natural and logical consequences”. The advantages of this strategy include that it:

- Holds children, not their parents, responsible for their behaviour
- Allows children to make their own decisions about what behaviour is appropriate
- Permits children to learn from the natural or social order of events, rather than forcing them to comply with the wishes of other persons.

In situations, where there is no natural consequence or where it may be dangerous to allow it to occur, then logical consequences may be substituted. Natural consequences - as the name implies - are as a direct result of the action. Logical consequences, on the other hand, are usually put in place by the parent.

For example, if a child leaves their bike on the front lawn it may be stolen. The natural consequence in this instance would be undesirable for all involved. However a logical consequence could be that you confiscate the bike for one day. This effectively mimics the possible consequence of the child’s behaviour (being without the bike) in a temporary way.

*Proudly managed by*



For consequences to be effective, the child must see them as logically related to their misbehaviour - they must “fit” the behaviour in a logical way.

Logical consequences also work best when they are stated clearly in advance, so that the follow through is not a surprise. This approach can also make it easier for parents to remain calm.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES

### Be firm and kind

Your tone of voice indicates your desire to be kind, while your follow-through with appropriate action indicates your firmness.

### Don't try to be the “good” parent or the “rescuer”

Allow the child to experience the consequences of his or her own decisions. Avoid over-protecting and taking responsibilities which are logically the child's.

### Be consistent

No parent is totally consistent. However the more consistent you are, the better your children will know what to expect. They will then be able to make decisions accordingly.

### Separate the deed from the doer

Your voice and response should indicate that you respect the child even when her or his behaviour is not socially acceptable. Avoid subjective terms like ‘naughty’ or ‘bad’.

### Encourage independence

Your children will be better prepared to be responsible, happy adults if you let them become increasingly more independent as they get older. Avoid doing for children what they can do (or learn to do) for themselves.

### Recognise who owns the problem

Parents often assume ownership of many problems which actually belong to their children, and can be a great teaching tool

### Don't worry about other people

It is easy to become intimidated by the possibility of disapproval from other parents and friends. Your long-term goal is to raise a responsible child and this is your business. No one knows them as well as you do.

*If you are concerned about a public scene, try picturing yourself as an outsider. Imagine you saw a child behaving inappropriately in a supermarket – what would you expect? Most adults expect parents to be able to manage their child's behaviour. Natural and logical consequences are an appropriate way to do so.*

### Talk less, act more

A child easily becomes “parent deaf”, particularly if they suspect you are going to be critical of them. Remember “That is good but” is still criticism even if a light tone is used. Do most of your talking when you are on friendly terms and keep talk to a minimum as you follow through with logical consequences.

### Refuse to fight or give in

Set limits and allow the child to decide how to respond to them. Be willing to accept the child's decision. You do not have to win, because you are not in a contest. Your goal is to help the child become responsible for his or her own behaviour.

### Let children share responsibility

When an incident occurs in a group of children, don't try to find the guilty party. Fault-finding only increases rivalry among children. Do not listen to tattling.

Let all of them share the responsibility. Have the children decide how to handle the problem.

### Be fair

Make sure consequences match the severity of the behaviour. Children won't respond well to a consequence if it seems overwhelming or unfair.

## KEY STEPS

### Provide Choices

Choice is essential in the use of logical consequences. Alternatives are proposed by the parent and the child decides. Then the child makes a choice without external pressure.

However you must be prepared to accept your child's decision, so only offer alternatives that are acceptable to you.

The parent's tone of voice is crucial. It must reflect an attitude of respect, acceptance and goodwill.

*"I'm willing to wash only what is in the washing basket."*

### Offer Opportunities

As you follow through with a consequence, assure your child that there will be an opportunity change things later on.

While consistency on your part is important, children also need a chance to show you that they have learned and know the correct thing to do.

*"I see that you didn't clean up after your snack.. You may not use the kitchen tomorrow. Ask if you can use it again in a few days' time."*

### Extend the Consequence

If the behaviour is repeated, extend the time that must elapse before the child can try again. If children continue to misbehave, they are saying they aren't ready to be responsible.

*"I see that you're still not ready to settle down and have decided to leave the room. You may try again tomorrow night."*

To make sure your action is an expression of logical consequences (not punishment), it should:

- demonstrate an 'open' attitude
- give the child a choice (and you accept their decision)
- use a tone of voice which expresses goodwill
- be logically related to the misbehaviour.

## An Example

On Friday, nine-year-old James was invited to a Saturday movie. He was to be at his friend's house for a ride at one o'clock.

James' mother told him that he could go if his chores were finished first. James agreed; but he ended up doing other things most of Saturday morning. His chores were not finished by the time he was to leave.

When James came to his mother for money for the movie, she said "I'm sorry James, but your chores are not done, so you'll have to miss the movie."

"Aww, Mum!" begged James. "Can't I do them when I get home?"

"No, our agreement was that they would be finished before you went" answered Mum.

"Oh, please, Mum!" cried James. "I've been waiting a long time to see this movie. Please let me go."

At this point Mum left the room, so that James could not engage her in an argument. She then called the other parent to inform him that James would not be going.

## Punishment or Consequence?

### Punishment expresses the power of personal authority

*"Tom, turn off that TV or else! Mum and I are trying to sleep."*

A logical consequence acknowledges mutual rights and mutual respect.

*"Tom, I realise you enjoy your Saturday morning cartoons, but Mum and I are trying to sleep. Please turn the TV down or play outside. You decide which you'd rather do."*

### Punishment is concerned with past behaviour.

Mum: *(angrily)* "Ralph! It's six o'clock. You're always late! How many times have we gone through this? You never seem to care. You can just stay home for a week, and you can just forget about that bike we talked about."

Logical consequences are concerned with present and future behaviour.

Mum: *"I'm sorry, but you're not ready to take responsibility for coming home on time. We'll try again tomorrow"*

## Applying Consequences at Different Ages

Children grow and change rapidly, and sometimes your parenting skills and strategies need to change just as fast. While the principles of applying natural and logical consequences stay the same, you may need to change your approach slightly with children of different ages.

### Infancy

No discipline needed at this stage.

### 18 months – 2 years

Some strategies can begin to work, but it may be difficult for your child to understand and follow instructions. At this stage your child needs patience, attention and help to learn how to regulate their emotions.

You can introduce consequences that will help your child learn about cause and effect: for example, removing yourself from reach if your child hits you.

### 2-3 years

Expect your child to learn the power of 'no'. Avoid offering too many choices or asking questions that can be answered by 'no'.

Natural and logical consequences will start to be effective. Remember not to use too many words.

### 3-5 years

Communicate clear and reasonable expectations of your child's behaviour. Children will start being able to understand and make simple choices.

For example, rather than "do you want to wear a jacket?" it is preferable to say "Would you like to wear the red jacket or the blue jacket?"

### School Age

With older children consequences become easier to apply. By this stage they are developing more language and social skills, and will have an increasing understanding of how they are expected to behave.

Many of the examples used earlier in this info sheet apply to school aged children.

## Punishment or Consequence?

### Punishment is often unrelated to logic or the situation

Mum: *(angrily)* "Susan! I've told you a thousand times to keep your room tidy! I can't vacuum the carpets with all that mess on the floor, so you can forget about going out on Saturday night."

Compare this to where the consequence is related to the misbehaviour:

Mum: *"Susan, I'm going to vacuum the carpets today. I can't vacuum in your room if there are books and clothes lying around on the floor. So I'll place them in bags and put them in the garage if you decide not to pick them up."*

### Punishment tends to be personalised or implies moral judgment

Dad: *(angrily)* "You took my hammer without permission! Don't you know that's like stealing? You know stealing is wrong! And now you've lost it! Your pocket money is cut off until the hammer is paid for!"

Logical consequences are impersonal; they imply no element of personal moral judgment:

Dad: *"How will you replace the hammer Hugh?"*

### Punishment is often a 'put down'. It threatens the "offender" with disrespect or loss of love.

Mum: *"You didn't feed the dog so you can't play with him today. You are such an inconsiderate child. Maybe this will teach you the value of being responsible for your pet!"*

When logical consequences are invoked, the parent's voice is calm and implies good will.

Mum: *No, Tom, you can't play with the dog. You haven't taken time to give him his food and water today. We'll try again tomorrow.*

### Punishment demands obedience:

*Susan and Sally are disturbing the meal by kicking each other under the table.*

Dad: *"You two knock it off right now or you'll go to bed without supper!"*

Logical consequences, on the other hand, permit choice, and give children some sense of control:

Dad: *"You may settle down or leave the table until you're ready to join us."*