

This *Positive Discipline* booklet is provided through FAM: parenting central for father and mothers, friends and mentors and families like yours. FAM is a program of Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now). For more information, call 804-257-7226.

#### References and Acknowledgements

Early child development milestones were taken from the Center for Disease Control's Act Early campaign. This material can be accessed at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The site contains helpful information about children's health and positive parenting.

Information was also provided by *Understanding and Guiding Children as They Grow and Develop*, produced by the Fairfax County Blue Ribbon Campaign Coalition.

# discipline

**POSITIVE**

*Families are Magic*

[FAMRICHMOND.ORG]

## Positive Discipline

We often think of discipline in terms of our reaction to our child's misbehavior. However, discipline is much broader than this. It is the on-going process of helping our children grow up to be responsible, compassionate and successful adults. Each day is a chance to teach our children the skills needed to become the best person they can be. There are many challenges along each parenting journey. Each child and each parent is different. This booklet is intended to help us celebrate the joys and negotiate the challenges of parenting by addressing child development and discipline issues from birth through adolescence.

## Discipline vs. Punishment

Many of us confuse discipline and punishment. We often react to situations (punishment) rather than follow our "master plan" of teaching our kids (discipline) why certain behaviors are preferred over others. Discipline strives to equip children with the tools they need to be successful; such as problem-solving skills, accountability, empathy, and the ability to control strong emotions and express them appropriately. Discipline is not without boundaries, however. Discipline requires providing children with reasonable rules and reasonable consequences.

Punishment may teach children not to engage in a certain behavior, but it does not provide parents with the opportunity to teach children the appropriate and acceptable alternatives. Because punishment is often harsh, children are more likely to lie to avoid being caught and facing the punishment. Punishment teaches fear; discipline teaches respect and provides opportunities for learning.

## Be a good role model.

Some of us were raised hearing our parents say, "Do as I say, not as I do." This is not effective. We are our children's first and most influential teachers. They learn how to interpret and react to the world through their observation of us. It is important that we model the behaviors we want our children to develop.

**Some areas we may want to look at include:**

### ***Stress and Anger Management skills***

How do I handle stress and anger? If my child handles situations in the same way, would I correct him/her? If so, it might be a good time to learn some new skills in this area. Many of us need help managing our stress and anger.

### ***Self-Esteem***

How do I really feel about myself? Are the feelings I have about myself feelings that I would want my child to have? We don't want one of our child's first acts to be stepping on a scale or belittling him/herself. We live in a world that expects perfection – a standard none of us can meet. Learning to accept our limitations and celebrate our strengths is a good foundation for healthy self-esteem.

### ***Communication***

How do I communicate with my partner? My child? Other people? Do I need to be more assertive? Less assertive? Do I struggle to address conflict? Strengthening our communication skills enables us to help our children express themselves appropriately.

### ***Interpersonal Relationships***

Am I happy in my relationships? Children learn how relationships work by watching us interact with our partners, family members and friends. Make sure that the relationships they witness are ones you would want for them in the future. Ask yourself what you are modeling for your child. None of us are perfect, but each of us can work to be a better person. If we show our kids how we enjoy and appreciate life, we can give them a wonderful gift. Happy parents make happy

## Ask for Help

Asking for parenting help is a sign of a good parent. Each child is their own person, as is each parent, and parenting changes all the time. We all need different types of help and at different times. Sometimes, a quick look at a website will provide clarity and ideas. Others times, we need to talk to someone or attend a workshop on a particular topic. Many excellent resources exist in our community and beyond.

FAM (www.FAMrichmond.org) provides parenting and child development information, links to local family activities, contacts for local organizations that provide parenting support and education, a calendar of parenting workshops in the area and much more. FAM also partners with the 1-800-CHILDREN help line to provide answers for any of your parenting questions—no question is too big or too small.

## Sibling Rivalry

Sibling rivalry can be particularly challenging for parents. We can find ourselves wondering, “Why can’t they just work it out and get along?” Sibling rivalry is very normal and can be helpful for kids.

Sibling rivalry happens for many reasons. Kids are competing for the most precious resource of all: your time and affection. Children are struggling to define themselves, learning to deal with conflict and strong feelings, and trying to maneuver through our competitive society.

They have inherent differences that impact how they deal with the world and how we treat them.

Through relationships with siblings, children can learn to deal with jealousy, anger, conflict and disappointment. They can also learn to share, cooperate, look out for another person’s well being and empathize.

Initially, we can model good anger and conflict management skills and teach them to our children. Help children deal with strong emotions in safe, healthy ways.

Each child has different gifts and challenges; comparing children will not change these but can intensify sibling rivalry and jealousy.

Examine if and why you are treating your children differently? Does your child remind you of your (or someone else’s) positive or negative characteristics? This can impact how we relate to our children, so we should honestly reflect upon our attitudes.

Helping children learn to deal with conflict will help them within your house and throughout their lives. Try to recognize when conflict is developing and encourage your children to “work it out.” You will have to help with this process a great deal in the beginning but, as children strengthen their conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, your role will decrease.

Encouraging cooperation (rather than competition) within your family can also help. Make sure to praise them when they are getting along and playing well together — a little positive reinforcement goes a long way.

It can also help to have each child name things he/she *likes* and *dislikes* about his/her sibling. This helps our children appreciate the strengths of their siblings while giving them an opportunity to express their feelings.

Create “special” alone time with each child. Each child needs to feel special and unique. Parents are busy, so it does not have to be an entire day or evening. Tuck in time at night can be ideal for this.

It is never too late to change patterns of behavior that are not working for our families and to help our children get along better.

## Babies (0-12 months)

Becoming a parent is one of the most wonderfully overwhelming experiences. Sometimes, it is just overwhelming. Becoming a parent means sleep deprivation, new responsibilities, and changes to your lifestyle.

### Development

You can stimulate your baby’s development in many ways. Talking, singing and reading to your baby helps develop communication skills. Let your baby explore his/her senses by exposing him/her to different textures, sounds, tastes, colors and more.

Don’t worry about spoiling your baby. Responding to his/her cries teaches your child that you are reliable and will take care of him/her.

#### **By 3 months**

Your baby develops a social smile.  
Raises head/chest when lying on stomach.  
Watches faces intently.

#### **By 7 months**

Enjoys social play.  
Transfers objects from hand to hand.  
Babbles.  
Rolls over.

#### **By 9 months**

Stands while holding on to something.  
Bangs objects together.  
Picks things up with thumb and finger.  
Indicates wants with gestures.

### Discipline

*Meet your baby’s needs.* We want our babies to learn that they can trust us, that we are there for them and that we will keep them safe. Accomplishing these tasks helps them to develop into the curious toddlers they should become.

*Child-proof your home.* Making the environment safe for children will maximize their fun and promote learning and also will minimize the risk of them breaking something, getting into poisons, or putting small items into their mouths.

*Develop routines to help your child know what to expect and lower his/her stress.* Having a predictable eating, sleeping, and play schedule will benefit both you and baby.

*Cope with your crying baby.* Often you will recognize your baby’s cues by learning when he/she is hungry, tired, or needs a diaper change. But there are times when your child will just cry. Try to comfort him/her, but take a break when you start to feel overwhelmed. Step outside to take a deep breath, call a friend or family member, and learn to take care of yourself. If you are happy and healthy, your baby will be, too.

*For tips on how to soothe your crying baby, visit the Fussy Baby Index on [www.askdrsears.com](http://www.askdrsears.com).*

## Toddlers (1 year to 3 years)

The world is a fascinating place to explore as a toddler. Toddlers are learning to be independent, but they can experience a lot of frustration during this time. They may not always have the skills they need, but they often don't want to accept our help.

### Development

#### 1-Year-Olds

Sit, crawl and pull up to stand by holding onto furniture.  
Bang objects together.  
Respond to simple requests.  
May say one or two words.

#### 2-Year-Olds

Walk alone.  
Point to an object or picture when named.  
Begin make-believe play.  
Demonstrate increasing independence.

### Discipline

*Child-proofing may need to become more sophisticated due to your child's developing physical skills.* Remember that child-proofing can lower your anxieties by providing a safe place for your toddler to play.

*Allow outlets for all that energy.* Kids need time to run and play to burn off their excess energy.

*Keep rules simple, be consistent and have predictable consequences.* Kids at this age can follow simple requests (i.e. "No hitting," or "Feet on the floor") but lack the ability to remember complex directions. They will need your constant support and redirection. Being consistent helps kids learn that you "mean what you say." Their limit testing will

decrease once they realize you will not give into their requests.

*Keep your cool.* Losing your patience with your child is common during this stage as kids test the limits of their world. Model appropriate stress and anger management techniques.

*Teach your child to manage his/her anger and other emotions.* Being a good role model is the first step. Teach him/her relaxation techniques and other ways to stay in control of his/her feelings.

*Encourage your child's development and curiosity.* Help him/her learn to manipulate and sort objects. Take him/her on nature walks and to new places.

*Catch your child "being good" and ignore unwanted behavior (as long as it is not harmful or destructive) as much as possible.* Focus your energy on what behaviors you want from your child. At this stage, children love attention and demonstrate more acceptable behaviors overall when they receive praise for them.

*Spend time with your child.* Misbehavior can result when children are seeking attention. Play, read and have fun with your children. It will curb their misbehavior since they will be too busy having fun with you.

Visit [www.bornlearning.org](http://www.bornlearning.org) for ideas on how to turn everyday activities into fun, learning experiences for your child.

## Teenagers (13 years to 18 years)

### Discipline

*Keep lines of communication open.* Teens may talk more to their friends about their problems during this stage of development but they should know their parents are there for them. Remind them.

*Know your teen's friends and families.* Stay involved. Know what they are doing on the computer, what they are watching on TV, what their interests are and what matters to them.

*Continue to praise and support your teen.* Teenagers experience the lowest self-esteem as compared to any other stage of child development. Their uncertainty about themselves and the world around them often results in negative feelings. They may not act like they appreciate your praise, but they need it.

*Respect your child's privacy but protect their safety.*

This is a fine line for any parent. Teens need privacy, but safety is more important than privacy.

*Create rules and consequences for violating rules with your teen.*

They may still feel that the rules are unfair... but involving them in the process often decreases this and increases the likelihood that they will follow the rules.

*Help your teen develop realistic goals and strategies for achieving these.* As teens prepare for the future, they need guidance from us in setting attainable goals and in figuring out how to reach these goals.

*Learn about adolescence and talk to other parents of teens.* Knowledge helps us to understand our teens, but we also need to know we aren't alone in dealing with our teenagers.

*There are a number of online resources specifically for teens and parents of teens.*

*Visit the sites below designed for you and your teen:*

[www.parentingteens.about.com](http://www.parentingteens.about.com)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)

## Teenagers (13 years to 18 years)

Teens are growing and finding their place in the world, and they need us to help them. Teens want to be independent but have not developed the skills they need to do so; therein lies the conflict of teens everywhere. Peer pressure intensifies; expectations increase; emotions fluctuate; and the future is pending.

### Development

#### *Physical Development*

Puberty causes many physical changes in boys and girls. The growth spurt associated with puberty can add over a foot to a child's height while changing his/her body shape. Puberty can start as early as age 7 or 8.

Girls will develop breasts and experience their first period. Boys will experience growth of their sexual organs and facial hair – and also have their voice change. Both will grow pubic and underarm hair and have oil and sweat-producing glands emerge.

#### *Cognitive Development*

Adolescents begin to think in new ways. Their reasoning skills increase as does their interest in social issues, values and ideas. They are able to understand more complicated topics. They will probably start to win debates with us during this stage of development with their increased cognitive abilities. Their thinking becomes more logical and their problem-solving abilities become more sophisticated.

#### *Social Development*

Adolescents waver between independence and dependence. Testing limits is a part of this stage of development. With this, family conflict often increases. However, teens still love and need their families. The importance of peers increases at this stage – another sign of your teen's emerging independence.

During early adolescence, most of your child's friends will be same-sex peers with similar interests. Friends become more diverse later in adolescence. Early adolescence is characterized with conformity while individuality is celebrated more in later adolescence. Peer pressure begins in early adolescence and continues throughout this stage.

#### *Emotional Development*

Adolescence is characterized by mood swings, inconsistent reliability, self-absorption and impulsivity. Your teen's changing hormones, peer pressure, uncertainty about his/her self and place in the world and the impending future are all components of this instability.

They may experience abrupt mood and behavior swings and think more of themselves than others. Teens need assistance in negotiating these challenges from parents, peers and other loved ones. Overall, what teens need is our patience, support, love, and a sense of security.

## Pre-Schoolers (3 years to 5 years)

"Why?" This is the question of each moment for a 3 to 5-year-old. Children this age really want to understand and question the world around them. The endless barrage of questions can exhaust even the most patient parent but this process is essential for a child's development.

### Development

#### *3-Year-Olds*

Climb well.  
Turn book pages one at a time.  
Use 4 to 5 word sentences.  
Sort objects by shape and color.

#### *4-Year-Olds*

Go up and down stairs without support.  
Draw circles and squares.  
Tell stories.  
Cooperate with other children.

#### *5-Year-Olds*

Swing, climb, hop and do somersaults.  
Say name and address.  
Can count 10 or more objects.  
Like to sing, dance and act.

### Discipline

*Encourage your child's desire to help by assigning them chores around the house.* Children this age can, with supervision, pick up their toys and begin to make their beds. They can, with support, start to take responsibility for their own hygiene. Praise your child for his/her skills and helpful behavior.

*Give your child time to play with other*

*children.* This will help your child learn to cooperate and share. Friendships will start to emerge during this developmental stage.

*Continue with clear, consistent rules with predictable consequences.* Rules can become more complex but children will still need your support and supervision to complete tasks and follow rules. Chore and behavior charts can be helpful for children at this age.

*Teach your child safety rules.* Kids this age start riding bikes/tricycles, playing in the pool, romping on the playground and other fun activities. They need to know basic safety rules to try to prevent accidents in these settings.

*Teach your child to manage his/her anger and other emotions.* Being a good role model is the first step to doing so. Teach your child relaxation techniques and other ways to stay in control of his/her feelings.

*Try to identify "triggers" for misbehavior.* Children who are hungry or tired often have a hard time getting along with others. Some children need warnings when a transition is about to occur (i.e., "We are going to go inside in five minutes, so let's start putting away the toys."). Learn your child's cues so you can prevent some misbehavior. Reading your child's cues will lower your parenting stress and help your child adapt to the world better.

*Pre-schoolers tend to develop a lot of fears (which pass quickly).* Show that you understand your child's fears and help him/her conquer them.

## School-Age Children (6 to 12 years)

Entering school is a big developmental milestone for children. Kids at this age become more concerned about friendships and their abilities. They start to care more about others and want to be liked by their peers and by grown-ups.

### Development

#### Physical Development

Children in middle childhood (grades 6-8) typically experience faster growth than in elementary school. They will become more coordinated and exhibit greater skills (no longer needing kid-sized utensils and tools).

Between 9 and 11 years old, most children will experience their growth spurt and enter puberty. At this age, most children have lost all of their baby teeth and have honed their hand-eye coordination.

#### Social and Emotional Development

School-age children become more interested in their friendships and in being part of a team. They start to compete with their friends and begin to recognize their strengths and weaknesses (i.e. "I am a fast runner." or "I struggle with spelling.").

Kids this age also start to see that parents make mistakes. They begin to understand

right from wrong and develop their conscience.

As middle childhood progresses, children start to worry more about "fitting in" and being accepted as part of a peer group. With this change, peer pressure can emerge.

#### Cognitive Development

Children at this stage of development start to think more logically. They begin to understand cause and effect. They become more creative. They develop considerable cognitive skills during this stage. They learn to read, to complete simple – and then more complex – mathematics, and many other skills during this stage.

*KidsHealth provides doctor-approved information on the physical, emotional, and behavioral issues affecting children at [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org).*

*The site has separate areas for kids, teens, and parents—with age-appropriate design and content to help all families pursue good health and wellness.*

## School-Age Children (6 to 12 years)

### Discipline

*Provide outlets for energy.*

After sitting in school all day, kids often need some time to run and play to burn off their boundless energy. Allowing some time for this will make getting their homework and other household chores done much easier.

*Talk to your child.*

Having open communication lets your child know you are there to listen and help. Setting this foundation will make negotiating the teen years easier for both you and your child.

*Be clear and consistent with your rules and consequences.*

School-age children can help you in developing rules/expectations for behavior and consequences. Working together to create rules helps children learn to be responsible and cooperative; it also increases their investment in following rules and decreases arguments about consequences.

*Be involved in your child's life.*

Know who your child's friends are and what they are interested in. Teach computer/Internet safety and monitor your child's computer and television usage.

*Enhance your child's problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.*

Talk about difficult topics and scenarios with your child. Sometimes, they will bring these to you; other times, something on the news or TV may prompt a conversation.

Let your child come up with solutions/strategies for problems and weigh the pros and cons of each. Kids face difficult issues at younger ages these days and they need to be equipped with the skills to handle them.

*Have fun as a family.*

Strengthening your relationship by having fun together is good for parents and children.

*Show your love for your child.*

Be affectionate and caring. Children at this stage worry more about friends and being accepted; a parent's unconditional support and love is their anchor during this time.

*An important aspect of discipline is keeping children safe while enabling them to explore their world. Learn more about safety and prevention at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

*The CDC For You: Individuals section has extensive information on all life stages and special populations.*