

CONSEQUENCES

natural and logical

"Natural and logical consequences" is a discipline method that develops responsibility. It holds children, not their parents, accountable for the children's behavior. Once you start using it, it soon becomes a way of life. It is a good approach to continue to use as your child grows into and through adolescence. It allows you to take a less involved role in behavior management since you place responsibility on your child.

You set the rules, he makes his choice, and he must deal with the consequences of his choice.

WHAT: A consequence lets your child experience the consequences of his or her behavior from the natural and social order of events rather than the wishes of someone else, namely you.

WHY: This puts the responsibility in your child's lap; he learns from his own experiences. You are giving your child the message that you trust him to make responsible choices and that if he doesn't, there is a consequence he will have to experience. This teaches your child cooperation, self-restraint, and accountability. For example, your son may learn that if he leaves his bike outside, it can be stolen or get broken. By not having the bike replaced immediately, he learns that he must be more careful with his things. If your daughter borrows something from her brother and loses it, she must (with your help) figure out how to replace it. Your child will begin to see that consequences are logically tied to misbehavior.

WHEN: This method works well for any behavior for which your child is responsible, and behavior that has natural and logical consequences. This method is not appropriate for behaviors which would put your child or another person in physical danger.

HOW: Look at your child. Have a calm, natural tone. Be firm and kind. Avoid blaming.

State the rule: "The living room must be cleaned up after you have a snack."

Offer a choice: "Either you clean up the dishes and crumbs, or you won't be able to eat in here while you watch TV."

Make the child accountable. Allow her to experience the consequences of her behavior: "I see that you've decided not to eat in the living room anymore."

Put the consequence into effect: "Since you did not clean up, you may not eat in the living room for three days." When appropriate, offer to try again at another time: "Perhaps you can try again in two days."

Separate the deed (the misbehavior) from the doer (your child). This method does not attack the child's personality or character; it has no element of personal or moral judgment. It simply focuses on the behavior which needs to be changed. Avoid saying "You are a slob, you always make a mess."

Avoid pity and overprotecting your child. You are not helping your child learn responsibility and accountability if you give in, rescue him, fight with him or argue.

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