



Living with Children the 3-to 5-year-olds

DISCIPLINE

Dorothy Taylor and Lynne Amézquita*

Guidance — Discipline — Punishment

Most people have ideas about guidance, discipline and punishment for children. Parents often wonder if they are doing the “right thing” by their children.

Children are not born good or bad. A child learns to do things that make him feel good. He also learns that bad things get him attention, too.

No two children are alike. Any parent will tell you that you cannot handle temper fits and flower picking the same way with any two children. One child may need for you to be firm and another child may feel punished by a few words.

A parent is an individual, too. You have feelings and needs. When the child does something you like, you feel good. You feel

something, too, when a child does something you do not like.

Guidance

When parents guide or lead children, the children learn to stand up for themselves, do things on their own and generally please the parents. Guidance is not an easy way to control children. It takes time and patience.

If you listen to the ways in which parents handle children, you will find the words “don’t,” “stop” and “quit” in many commands to children. Telling a child what *not to do* does not tell him *what to do*. Changing the “*don’t’s*” to “*do’s*” shows a child the way you want him to act.

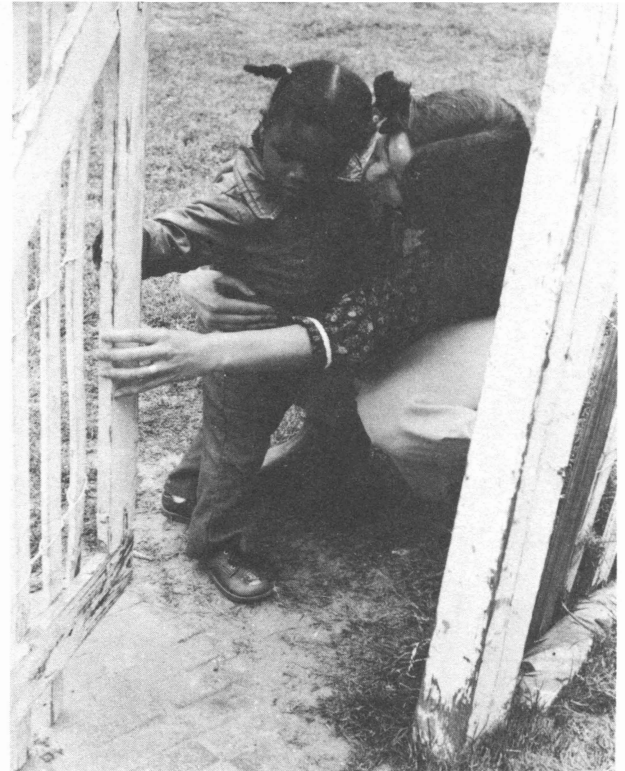
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Don't's	Translated into Do's
Don't throw the ball.	Roll the ball on the floor.
Don't squeeze the kitten.	Hold the kitty like this.
Don't fight.	Talk to him. Find the cause.
Don't touch that.	Just look, because it breaks.



It is important for a child to develop a feeling that he is able to do things and that he is a worthwhile person. A "can do" feeling helps the child to try new things and to approach school and other life situations with confidence. Always telling a child he is too little or that he cannot do something well will destroy his self-confidence.

Situation	Harmful	Helpful Guidance
Lynn spills the garbage he is emptying.	"Can't you ever do anything right?"	"That's a hard job. Next time carry it this way and then it won't spill."
Terry cries in frustration.	"If you would just listen to me, that would not happen."	"If you do this first, it will work."
Sammy cries because he cannot get a wagon wheel on his trike.	"You ought to know that won't work."	"Let's see why it didn't work."

Discipline

Discipline has to do with rules set by adults — usually parents. Discipline is teaching a child to act in ways that are acceptable to friends, neighbors and the community.

Usually young children do not help set the rules. Sometimes the rules are too hard and are not understood by young children. Children need to be taught self-discipline and responsible behavior — but this usually takes about 15 years for a child to learn.

Punishment

Punishment is used by some adults to change a child's behavior. Punishment can

be spanking, slapping, beating, strapping, jerking or shaking a child. It is also threatening a child, withholding love ("I won't love you if you tear the book."), or withholding a pleasure ("You can't go to the park until you've had a nap.").

Using punishment to change behavior can cause problems. The child may not know for sure what behavior he needs to change. He knows something is wrong, but may not know what it is. Punishment may weaken the child's desire to repeat the act in front of the person who punished him, but the child usually will repeat the act somewhere else.

Some things seem like punishment because they hurt. For instance, a shot for a

child who stepped on a rusty nail seems like punishment, but it is not.

Even if parents beat a child until he is bruised, punishment cannot make the child any better than the example he sees around him every day. He will try to act like people he loves and respects.

- **STOP** what you are doing.
- **LOOK** at your children. See how they are growing. What are they really like?
- **LISTEN** to your children. They say things with their voices, their facial expressions and their body movements.

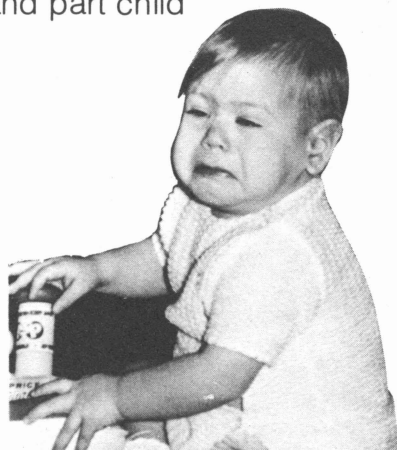
Growing Pains

Children grow in body, in mind, in spirit and personality and in friendships. Growth makes children act the way they do. Children change every day as they face new problems and have to learn to get along in the world.

What to Expect of Little Children

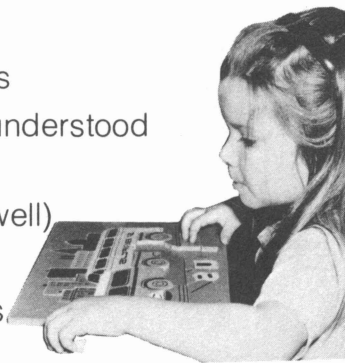
The 2-year old is:

- Negative
- Noisy
- Possessive (mine!)
- Determined to have his own way
- Curious
- Pokey (plays in food, dabbles in everything)
- Insistent on routines (likes to do things the same way — over and over)
- Part baby and part child



The 3-year old:

- Can make a few choices
- Can talk enough to be understood
- Tries to please
- Conforms (minds fairly well)
- Follows orders
- Can accept suggestions



The 4-year old:

- Asks many questions
- Wants friends
- Tends to be bossy
- Brags and stretches the truth
- Talks a lot
- Thinks he is very important



The 5-year old:

- Is friendly
- Is businesslike
- Likes to dress up
- Likes to imitate adults
- Likes projects and activities
- Likes praise
- Is dependable
- Tries to be independent
- Is serious and demanding
- Can give his name and address
- Tattles on others



Parents cannot hurry or stop growth, and they cannot do the growing for their children. Every child must grow according to his own growth pattern. It is the parents' responsibility to provide the right food, space and loving care for each child to grow and develop at his own rate.

Who Gets Punished?

Sometimes parents have a bad day. Then their children usually have a bad day,

too! Think before you punish a child. Are you mad at your wife or husband? Is this the reason you yell at your child or jerk a child by the arm? Have you really solved the problem, or just put it on the back burner to simmer longer? Remember — never punish in anger. You may get rid of your anger, but at your child's expense.

Punishment or discipline should be no worse than the violation. If a 2-year old child accidentally turns over his glass of milk, should you:

- a. Wipe up the spill and get more milk?
- b. Slap his hands for spilling the milk?
- c. Make him eat the rest of his meal without milk?
- d. Realize that he does not have good control of his hands and get more milk for him?

Mothers sometimes threaten children with "Wait until your Daddy gets home. He's going to get you good." Is this fair to the child or the father? The child has probably forgotten the wrong he did, the father is not involved in the problem and the mother is seen as weak by the children. Who wins this game?

If punishment is necessary, punish when the wrong is done. Don't wait. If parents want children to change their behavior, they must correct the wrong **every** time, not just once in a while.

It is helpful when mothers and fathers agree on discipline. Otherwise, children may get confused. If something is okay with mom, but not with daddy, children may get their signals mixed up. Children need help in knowing what is right and wrong.

Some families have rules for company and rules for home and family. When you are 2 to 5 years old, it is hard to remember one set of rules, much less two sets. It is easier on parents and little children if these rules can be the same.



CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

Dorothy Law Nolte

- If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility,
He learns to fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
- If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.
- If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to find love in the world.

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