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## DISCIPLINE FOR TODDLERS

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Time-out involves you placing your child in an area, such as his playpen, for a short period of time following each occurrence of a negative behavior. This procedure has been effective in reducing problem behaviors such as tantrums, hitting, and other aggressive acts, failure to follow directions, and jumping on furniture. Parents have found that this works much better than spanking, yelling, and threatening children. This handout is more appropriate for children ages nine months through two years.

### A. Preparations:

1. A place for time-out should be selected. This could be your child's playpen. It needs to be a dull place, but not a dark, scary, or dangerous place. The aim is to remove the child to a place where not much is happening, not to make the child afraid.
2. You should discuss with your spouse which behaviors will result in time-out.

### B. Procedure:

Step 1: Following the negative behavior, say to the child, "No, don't \_\_\_\_." Say this calmly; not screaming, talking angrily, or nagging. Carry the child to the playpen without talking to him. Carry him facing away from you.

Step 2: When the child is in the playpen, wait until he has stopped crying for about 10-15 seconds. Before your child has stopped crying, do not look at him, talk to him, or talk about him. After he is finally quiet, just go over the playpen, pick him up without saying a word, and set him on the floor near some of his toys. Do not reprimand him or mention what he did wrong.

Step 3: After each time-out episode, children should start out with a "clean slate." No discussion, nagging, threatening, or reminding is necessary. At the first opportunity, look for and praise positive behaviors. "Catch 'em being good."

### C. Summary of the Rules:

- Parents – Decide which behaviors require time-out ahead of time and discuss this with your spouse.
- Don't leave your child in time-out and forget him.
- Don't nag, scold, or talk to the child when he is in time-out. All family members should follow this rule.
- Remain calm; particularly when your child is being testy. Don't use time-out for every problem. Ignore most tantrums.

Adapted from Christopherson: *Little People: Common Sense Guidelines for Child Rearing* (Westport Publishers)

## SEVEN GUIDELINES FOR LIVING WITH CHILDREN

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1. **“Catch ‘em being good.”** The single most important rule in living this is to work very hard to praise or attend to the child when he is being appropriate (not when you feel like it). Being appropriate includes everything (depending on the parent’s person preferences) from playing quietly with siblings to doing homework to being a good sport.
2. **Let them help you.** The second most important rule is to let your children help you to do the variety of activities involved in everyday living. This is much better than doing the job or tasks by yourself because it is too difficult for the child to do. The “helping” might just consist of simulated “work” in your vicinity, but it is still good to have them with you.
3. **Monitor your children.** When the child is playing quietly – catch him being good! Don’t fall into the old trap that you don’t want to disturb *him*. A five to ten-second interaction is all that is necessary.
4. **Decide their own timetables.** You should decide on a reasonable bedtime and stick to it. Don’t do all of the housework yourself. Your most important job is that of teacher. Don’t use all of your time being maid, cook, etc.
5. **Discipline and enforcement of discipline should be as matter of fact as possible.** When a child breaks a rule, he should pay for it in whatever way you enforce broken rules. Once a child has paid for a broken rule, no part of the incident should ever be mentioned again. It is much better to have a child sit in a kitchen chair or sit on the sofa for three or four minutes than to spank him. The first spank is for the child, all the rest are for you. For a younger child, trying placing him in his crib until he is quiet for five or ten seconds, then go in and pick him up. Don’t be reluctant to have a child sit on the chair 10-15 times in one day if he deserves it.
6. **Lectures belong in lecture halls, not in homes.** Do not lecture your children – not even under the guise of reasoning with them. Threats and nagging are useless in dealing with children. Talking with your children is important; however, be careful that you avoid talking with them only at times of crisis or problems. Rather, spend your time talking with them when things are pleasant or running smoothly. For example, if you and your *child* are working together or going somewhere together, that is a perfect time to talk with your *child*.
7. **Show sympathy when you discipline.** When a child has to miss a movie, a trip to McDonald’s, or an opportunity to play with a friend because he hasn’t been behaving, you should be sympathetic with him, but don’t give in. Make sure that this sympathy doesn’t last over a minute.