



PARENT RESOURCE GUIDE

The Steps to Improving Your Child's Behavior

A proven formula that makes discipline predictable —
and effective



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HelpForYourChild.com

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OVERVIEW

There is a formula to child discipline. If you follow the recipe, the outcome is very predictable in a positive way. Children expect parents to behave in a particular manner; when they do, children tend to respond by being more manageable, respectful, calmer, and grateful. When parents don't follow the recipe, children tend to respond with belligerence, a sense of entitlement, being more argumentative, and stronger-willed.

The foundation: your relationship with your child

The most important element of a well-behaved child is the relationship. Discipline is based on the word 'disciple' — a willing and devoted follower. We want our kids following out of respect and comradery, not fear of punishment. We accomplish that by spending time with them, having fun, helping with homework, listening, talking, and 'just being there.' There is nothing more powerful in promoting discipline.

The information in this guide is drawn from the clinical expertise of Dr. John Carosso, Psy.D., current research findings, and authoritative sources including the DSM-5 and the National Institute of Mental Health. It is intended for informational purposes and does not replace a professional evaluation.

1

Assume Control

Demonstrate a sense of control over the situation. Children feel insecure when parents aren't secure in their ability to parent. The more insecure a child feels, ironically, the more difficult they become. Speak in a firm voice and project confidence. Give clear direction rather than make requests, and do so in a calm, business-like manner.

Assume Control — key reminders:

- ✓ Control based on action and relationship, not threats
- ✓ No repeated explanations and pestering
- ✓ Project self-confidence
- ✓ Business-like and calm
- ✓ Give specific directions, not requests (when you request, it implies the child can decline)

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Avoid Arguments and Emotion

Our two biggest enemies are our emotions and our words. The more we argue back and forth with our kids, and the more emotion we show, the weaker and more ineffectual we appear. Keep responses brief, no arguing, stay calm. A calm parent is much more intimidating than an emotional, out-of-control parent. It's also vital to differentiate issues that are not your problem but your child's problem. If your child's chores are not done and they can't go out and play, it's important to perceive the issue as your child's problem, not yours.

Avoid Arguments and Emotion — key reminders:

- ✓ Cut off communication if the child becomes belligerent
- ✓ Only attempt to reason if your child is being reasonable
- ✓ Give direction and walk away
- ✓ Communicate: 'It's your problem, not mine'

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Plan Ahead

Most childhood behavioral problems are very predictable. The drama unfolds in the same way, at the same time, in the same situation on a daily basis. There is power in that predictability – plan in advance, develop a game plan, and often avoid the problem situation entirely. Moreover, never give a direction or consequence without following through. It's better to not make the threat than to threaten and not follow through.

Plan Ahead – key reminders:

- ✓ Work together as parents
- ✓ Plan and prepare in advance
- ✓ Avoid your child's 'traps'
- ✓ Mean what you say and say what you mean

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Avoid Lecturing and Pestering

Your two biggest enemies are your words and your emotion. Stay concise, clear, and firm. It never hurts to have a sense of humor. Dr. Carosso describes being the 'James Bond of parents' – always calm, collected, and with a sense of humor. Using counting regimens ('1-2-3') is very helpful rather than ranting and pestering.

Avoid Lecturing and Pestering – key reminders:

- ✓ Brief and to the point
- ✓ Humor – be the James Bond of parents
- ✓ Don't explain, lecture, or pester unless your child is being reasonable
- ✓ Rely on consequences: 1-2-3, time-out, loss of privilege, behavior charts

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Focus on the Problem

Kids are great at distracting and straying from the problem. Don't allow yourself to be distracted! Stay focused on the issue at hand. Act like a broken record in repeating your directive — be clear, concise, and confident.

Focus on the Problem — key reminders:

- ✓ Be specific about what you want and what you like
- ✓ Stay focused
- ✓ Repeat the clear directive
- ✓ No emotion; model self-confidence
- ✓ Don't label the child's 'attitude' — focus on behavior

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Avoid All Distractions

When it's time for discipline, stay focused on the discipline. Turn off the TV, iPad, phone, radio, and video games. You can control electronics through the home's router if necessary. Just do it!

Avoid All Distractions — key reminders:

- ✓ Eliminate all distractions when addressing behavior

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Use Emotion in a Positive Way

While emotion is your enemy in discipline, it becomes your best friend when offering praise and kudos. Use lots of enthusiasm when praising your child — you can't give enough of it. You 'get what you praise,' so do so with gusto. A child wants to keep their 'attention-tank' full — fill it with praise, or they'll fill it with arguments and negative attention. Positive praise can also be low-key and very powerful. Dr. Carosso writes about the 'softer and closer approach' — getting in close proximity, talking in a low tone, and offering encouragement, support, and direction.

Use Emotion in a Positive Way — key reminders:

- ✓ Use lots of enthusiasm when praising
- ✓ You 'get what you praise'
- ✓ Fill their 'attention-tank' with praise
- ✓ The softer and closer approach is powerful

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Focus on Behavior and Use 'I-Feel' Statements

We tend to label our kids when we're frustrated — calling them 'lazy' or 'rude.' Instead, express frustration by focusing on the behavior and how it impacts your feelings. 'I feel frustrated when you don't do your chores' is far more productive than labeling.

Focus on Behavior and Use 'I-Feel' Statements — key reminders:

- ✓ Don't label; describe the specific behavior you do or don't want to see
- ✓ Use I-Feel statements: 'I feel frustrated when you ignore me'
- ✓ Tell them how you feel ('that's disappointing') — don't show them (control your emotional response)

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Role Model Effective Problem-Solving

'What you do speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you say.' If you want your child to remain calm during a stressful time, you have to model that calm problem-solving approach not only when dealing with your child, but in your daily interactions with others. Your child is always watching.

Role Model Effective Problem-Solving — key reminders:

- ✓ Model calm and effective problem-solving

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Pick Your Battles

Some hills aren't worth dying on. Prioritize behaviors beginning with dangerous behaviors, then destructive, then disruptive. We may choose not to fight a battle on any given day — we're tired, not much time, or it's simply 'not worth the fight.'

Pick Your Battles — key reminders:

- ✓ Priority order: Safety issues first → Aggression → Destruction of property → Defiance → Annoying behaviors last

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Managing Your Teen

Dealing with teens is a whole different ball game. You're parenting a pre-adult who wants to be treated that way, but doesn't always act that way. The trick is communication — attempting to reason, compromise, and negotiate.

- ✓ Involve your teen in setting the rules and boundaries — they need to see the rules as reasonable.
- ✓ Clearly explain the rules and expectations and how they will be enforced.
- ✓ Expect your teen to follow through.
- ✓ If they break a rule, have that talk and try to come to common ground.
- ✓ If you can't, rely on a punishment — usually a loss of privilege — and try to lay out potential consequences beforehand.

For additional resources, tools and guidance, please visit our Parents page at:
<https://helpforyourchild.com/resources>



Ready to take the next step?

Doctors Carosso and our experienced team are here to help.
Contact us to schedule an evaluation or to ask any questions.

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