



Alberta Home Visitation  
Network Association

Vol. 8 Issue 1

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## Provincial Director's Message

By Lavonne Roloff

This issue of Connections is focused on Healthy Parenting Strategies: Discipline. Everyone has an opinion on this area of child rearing. As parents, we hope to have children who grow into adults that have self-discipline. The journey begins when we have children, and as parents, we are charged with teaching our children how to be in the world.

There are a number of articles in this issue that discuss what discipline is and encourage parents to engage in positive discipline. The intention is to support children in their growth while maintaining their self-worth and teaching them how to act appropriately in the world around them. Check out the web links and resources. Many of the resources have been used for

a number of years so you may find that some of them are familiar. We have also included the link for the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth which the AHVNA board recently voted to endorse. It is worth taking the time to read this document.

Barbara Coloroso states that discipline is a "process that gives life to a child's learning. It is restorative and invites reconciliation. It is an ordering of the self from the inside, not an imposition from the outside." She further explains that the process of discipline does four things that the act of punishment cannot do:

1. Shows children what they have done
2. Gives them as much ownership of the problem as they can handle
3. Gives them options for solving the problem
4. Leaves their dignity intact

For more information, refer to the Parenting Wit and Wisdom parent tip sheet at [www.kidsareworthit.com](http://www.kidsareworthit.com).

Upon reflection, the process of discipline that she describes would also be applicable to anyone who is working with a parent or staff. These principles are ones that we would all hope to experience in our workplace or in interactions with others. When children are treated with respect and dignity, they grow into adults who are able to model this in their environments. Remember, it is a journey. ■

*Lavonne Roloff is the provincial director of the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association.*



# Can a Parent Discipline Without Punishment?

By Susan Patenaude



**A**s parents, what we know or understand about discipline is often limited to our own experience of being parented. The default reaction when we are upset and stressed tends to reflect our experience. In many families, there may be concern that a child who is not disciplined through punishment will be unruly and out of control.

As described in the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth (2004), “a typical situation resulting in physical punishment begins with a parent whose sense of control is threatened by a child’s behaviour...believing that the child’s behaviour is an intentional challenge to parental authority, the parent becomes angry.” Discipline based on emotional or physical punishment can have significant consequences for children.

Lack of knowledge of child development and/or experience with positive parenting practices can severely limit our capacity to understand our child’s behaviour in context. We may react in a manner that serves only to punish rather than to teach.

## Nurturing communication

**Healthy discipline does not equate to permissiveness.** It is, in fact, rooted in nurturing the child’s capacity to be responsible, empathic and a good communicator as an adult. All learning takes time, and when routed in understanding, rather than submission or compliance, is likely to have long-term benefits. It is important to set rules and provide structure for our children. Their ability to understand and live successfully within that structure is a reflection of how we have defined the rules concerning their developmental abilities and how we support their learning through repetition and modeling. Education and modeling provided in a context of warmth, patience and respect allow the child to feel safe, making mistakes and trying again rather than fearing the consequence of an error.

## Through a child’s eyes

We must also take the time to look at the world through the child’s eyes. What do they think and feel about their abilities,

the expectations placed on them and their place in the family? Given their often literal interpretation of things they see and hear, do they really understand circumstances and situations as an adult does? When a situation results in conflict between the adult and child, it is our responsibility as adults to demonstrate good communication skills to address the problem. What did the child understand about the situation? What did he think would happen?

Our tendency to focus on our own unmet needs can override taking the time to ask the child about her point of view or include her in problem solving. Issuing orders, speaking in anger and punishing the child emotionally or physically are quick responses that ultimately do not serve to teach alternate ways of behaving or making decisions. Nor does it keep us, as parents, responsible for nurturing the child’s development. Children are not responsible for fitting into this world. We are responsible for helping them successfully participate in this world. ■

*Susan Patenaude is the provincial coordinator of the Alberta Network for Safe and Healthy Children.*

# Parenting Challenges for Parent Educators

By Kathy Archer

In the grocery store, your five-year-old begs for a chocolate bar, and when you say no, he screams really loud so the whole store hears. Your daughter in junior high fails math, and when you attend her parent-teacher interview, she says it's because you didn't help her study. Your teenage son gets into trouble with the law, and you have to go to court with him. And...you are a parent educator. Ouch.

Living in a small town, raising my children and managing the parenting programs, I have been in the spotlight often with my parenting skills. Or maybe I just imagined it. The voices in my head would say, "Everyone is listening, and they *know* you are a parent educator. And what is worse, they think you are doing a terrible job!" I would work myself up, worried they would find out I was a *fraud*. It would be like a fashion model getting caught eating chocolate.

Actually, there were times people were watching me and judging me. That is human nature. And just as many times, others didn't notice or were too busy dealing with their own discipline issues. Others nodded their heads with empathy, acknowledging they had been there and had also struggled. Being a parent educator does make people look more closely at your parenting just like they look at the doctor to evaluate his health.

The truth is, it is so much easier to teach child development and discipline than it is to apply it to raising our own children. Two-year-olds have temper tantrums. Having said that, being patient and riding it out is not as easy as it sounds. Not every three-year-old is completely potty trained, but when it's your child that wets his pants at Moms and Tots, it is hard not to be embarrassed. Speaking of potty, elementary schools kids regularly have "potty mouth." That is part of growing up. Nevertheless, when it is your child telling an inappropriate joke at Thanksgiving dinner, you just might feel like crawling under the table. Teenagers. Yes, they push the limits, experiment and resist our values. All of this is normal. However, heading over to the neighbor's house to find your daughter, who has snuck out, can have an element of humiliation about it.

In our work, we teach parents they are not expected to be perfect. It is okay that consequences are not always flawless. The truth is, our children are also developing normally, and even though we teach parenting, we aren't expected to be perfect either.

## Tips for getting you through

- Use your friends and family; create a support group just like you tell your clients. Parenting is tough! It is important to be able to vent, brainstorm and get hugs when you need them.
- Read the material that you are sharing. Apply it. You have a wonderful gift in that you learn more about parenting every day. Make use of it.
- Acknowledge similarities in what your clients are experiencing and what you are noticing in your own parenting, but not outwardly to clients. It's easy to start comparing notes about your children and theirs. This can lead to unclear boundaries with clients and doesn't necessarily serve them. Instead, acknowledge it internally, and use that knowledge in your teaching. For example, when they bring up their struggle to get their child to do homework and you are experiencing this too, you can recognize your own

frustration. After looking internally, you can then say to a client, "It's pretty frustrating when you are trying and nothing seems to work. Let's go back to what we've learned about situations like this." Your empathy will be stronger because of it.

- When it gets too close to home, tell your supervisor. Some situations are just too similar to what you are going through, and you may need to pull back. If your client just became a single mom, and you also recently separated from your partner, you can use that to help you to empathize with her situation (remember, not to compare notes, but show genuine empathy). However, if you find that you are really struggling to keep your stories separate, talk to your supervisor. Sometimes just getting it out into the open is enough.
- Be careful of conflict of interest situations. In small towns, our kids go to the same schools, compete on the same sports teams and play together at the playground. While you may not always be able to keep your work and home life separate, there will be times that you need to really be careful. If a client's child is bullying your child, or your child is the bully, this may be cause for concern. Learn to recognize potential conflict of interests, and give your supervisor a heads up. It might be that you just need to be more sensitive to what you say, or you may need to do something about it.

Raising children as a parent educator can place parents in precarious situations. Be aware of when you need to do something different or when it is just your overactive saboteurs telling you everyone is watching. It is normal to struggle with parenting. No one is perfect. You get the added bonus, though, of learning each and every day how to handle it to the best of your ability!

*Kathy Archer ACC is a certified leadership coach and owner of Silver River Coaching. She coaches leaders and organizations to grow a new kind of leader for a new kind of time. Kathy devoted 20 years to family support programs and as a leader of parent educators.*

# Effective Parental Disciplinary Strategies

By Christina Rinaldi

**We** often hear that parenting is one of the toughest jobs in the world, and with good reason. Parenting is complex. Bradley (2007) discusses that parents must provide their children with

- safety and sustenance
- socio-emotional support
- adequate stimulation and instruction
- surveillance or monitoring
- structure
- social connectedness



Somewhere in between setting up bedtime routines and building forts, parents find many varied opportunities to help children achieve the main developmental milestones (e.g., cognitive, social-emotional) of early childhood, which sets the foundation for positive, mutual engagement between parents and children and creates a solid base for future socialization (Lollis, 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). But some parenting approaches are more effective than others in achieving socialization goals (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992).

Decades of parenting research provide solid scientific evidence on supportive parenting practices. Yet, one of the most talked about topics on parenting sites and blogs continues to be about parental discipline: how to discipline, when to discipline and the best strategies for discipline.

## What is discipline?

According to the Collins English dictionary (2005), discipline is “training or conditions imposed for the improvement of physical powers, self-control, etc.” Affiliated synonyms are correction, punishment and regulation. Discipline is associated with parental behaviours that aim **to prevent** child misbehaviour or **to correct** misbehaviours (Socolar & Stein, 1996). There is a distinction made between **reactive** (responding to child misbehaviour) and **proactive** (encouraging desired child behaviour) discipline (Socolar, 1997; Straus & Fauchier, 2007). These parenting strategies can be effective or ineffective.

Over time, the three main parenting dimensions consistently identified (Grolnick, 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983) have been

- warmth vs. rejection
- structure vs. chaos
- autonomy support vs. coercion

## Parenting styles

Diana Baumrind's (1971, 1991) seminal work on parenting identified two fundamental child-rearing dimensions: **warmth and structure**. When these two dimensions are jointly considered, four main parenting styles emerge

- authoritative (warm, responsive/restrictive, demanding)
- permissive (warm, responsive but permissive and undemanding)
- authoritarian (rejecting, unresponsive/restrictive, demanding)
- uninvolved (rejecting, unresponsive/permissive, undemanding)

These four parenting styles have been associated with a variety of childhood outcomes.

### Authoritative parenting style

This parenting style (flexible, democratic style with clear boundaries) is strongly associated with a range of later positive child outcomes (Baumrind et al., 2010; Maccoby, 2007), such as more effective social skills and school success (Grimes et al. 2004).

### Permissive and authoritarian parenting style

This style of parenting is associated with less positive child outcomes, such as internalizing, externalizing, academic difficulties and attention-problem behaviours (Booth-LaForce & Oxford, 2008; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012).

### No boundary or restrictive parenting style

Parenting with no boundaries or set expectations, and parenting that is too restrictive, coercive and not respectful have less positive outcomes for children. Discipline through power struggles, manipulation or coercion is least beneficial for parents, children and the parent-child relationship.

## Healthy disciplinary parenting strategies

Effective parental discipline encompasses elements of warmth and structure while fostering autonomy and supportive

behaviours in young children. Healthy disciplinary parenting strategies involve clear explanations and communication of

- developmentally-appropriate expectations (e.g., share toys, take turns) communicated in a respectful, calm and reassuring manner
- clear rules and limits (e.g., no hitting, throwing toys or jumping off furniture), which help to structure the young child's environment in a firm, positive manner
- clear consequences, when needed, (e.g., removal of toy, end of play) that are consistently followed through (Baumrind, 2012; Grolnick, 2012)

Finally, it is essential to note that parenting is not unidirectional, but rather, bidirectional where there is interaction between the parent and child. Parenting is also influenced by child characteristics such as age, gender and temperamental features (Dennis, 2006; Neppl et al., 2004). Using positive disciplinary approaches with young children can be very rewarding for parents, and they will gradually notice changes. Focusing on behaviours (rather than on the child) and on successes (rather than just misbehaviours) is an effective disciplinary strategy. Creating opportunities to teach through modelling, correcting inappropriate behaviours and providing children with acceptable behaviour options will have long-term benefits for all. ■

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Kids Kottage, a crisis nursery in Edmonton, offers support to parents in crisis or in need of respite, when they are overwhelmed and exhausted and have no other means of support. One way this support takes place is through my role of home visitation, where I may coach parents regarding their children's behaviours, then also encourage them to join a group learning opportunity called **Positive Discipline**<sup>1</sup>, facilitated at Kids Kottage.

## A Positive Discipline Approach

By Dianne Petersen

words meaningful and respectful, while maintaining the dignity of her child.

This parent has nine children, including two sets of multiples! She knows the meaning of seizing a moment for making quality time to provide the structure of discipline with the warmth of her nurturing. She is also a wonderful example of a parent who maintains a sense of humour while organizing the busy home schedules.

Positive Discipline brings an approach to parents where their children are positively (not reactively) taught and guided by respecting their rights to healthy development, protection from violence and active participation in their learning through

- identifying long-term goals
- providing warmth and structure
- understanding how children think and feel
- approaching problem solving actively

### Why is Positive Discipline such a transformational approach to parent learning?

Feedback comments received from participants at Kids Kottage best answer that question:

- ***"I am a more effective parent because I pay attention to my child's strengths and needs."*** This parent is better able to evaluate her home environment and her interactions with, and her response to, her child from the child's developmental perspective. This parent believes she has been given a 'second chance' with this child, twenty years younger than the first, and has grown in understanding her child's developmental milestones physically, socially, cognitively and emotionally.
- ***"How can I expect my children to change negative behaviours effectively when I am still trying to change myself?"*** This parent recognized the importance of putting aside the, "Don't do as I do, do as I say" rule, and now talks with her children at eye level, in a calm voice, making her

- ***"I must show myself as a positive example of who I want my children to become."*** This parent learned the importance of thinking about who her child will be as a contributing adult member of society and embraces this as her long-term goal when teaching her child not only knowledge and skills to solve a problem, but also the value of why families – adults and children – do things a certain way. This parent left an abusive relationship to determine her life needed to dramatically change; she realized her children were the legacy she was giving to the community.
- ***"I don't get myself tense and worked up when I'm talking."*** This young seventeen-year-old parent learned problem solving is easier when she calms herself first, then responds with planned, meaningful boundaries, vocabulary and choices for her two-year-old, in his times of frustration.

Positive Discipline presents learning opportunities that inform parents' knowledge and skills and provoke thinking about their families. Most importantly, Positive Discipline transforms our interaction with our children, no matter what our cultural, spiritual or socio-economic background. Positive Discipline applies to parents with children of any age—not to be hard on ourselves for all we may not have done, but to promote who we and our children are and can become! ■

Dianne Petersen, B.Ed., M.A., works in Follow Up with Kids Kottage in Edmonton.

<sup>1</sup> *Positive Discipline: What It Is and How to Do It* by Joan E. Durrant, Ph.D., published by Save the Children Sweden.

Related link: Positive Discipline [www.safechildren.ca/ForProfessionals/PositiveDiscipline/tabid/1402/Default.aspx](http://www.safechildren.ca/ForProfessionals/PositiveDiscipline/tabid/1402/Default.aspx)

## Online Resources About Positive Discipline Strategies

Alberta Network for Safe and Healthy Children. "Positive Discipline: What is it and how to do it" <http://tiny.cc/wximsww>.

Alberta Parent Link Centres. [www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca).

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# Healthy Disciplining

By Beth Broad

**D**iscipline can be challenging, particularly after holidays or other celebrations when routines have been disrupted and children are overstimulated. How do parents with a young child get life back on track?

To begin the process, try using a calm matter-of-fact attitude and tone, then stick to the routines that were working well before the holidays. Here are a few suggestions that may be helpful to get life back to a pre-celebration norm.

## Healthy eating

Never force a child to eat. Rather, offer healthy choices, and remember that a child has a small stomach so can benefit from eating smaller meals and healthy snacks throughout the day. A yearly weight gain of about two to four pounds in the toddler years is normal. Serve small portions so as not to overwhelm your child, and avoid introducing more than one food at a time. Choose healthy foods that appeal to young children. Serve colourful foods that are not too spicy, and avoid lumpy textures as some children will refuse food based solely on



*"Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem and smarter than you think."*

- Christopher Robin to Pooh in A.A. Milne

its texture. Get children involved in meal planning, preparation and baking. Offer them several healthy food choices, then let them choose their favourites.

Try to remove distractions such as the television or other loud sounds as children can become overstimulated and have difficulty focusing on the task at hand. Eating meals together is also an important part of role modeling healthy eating habits. Keep mealtime pleasant and conversational. This is not a time for challenging discussions, but rather, a wonderful opportunity to learn about each other.

Parents may also find some helpful advice in the "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" at the Health Canada website ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/)).

## Tantrum tips

Tantrums can happen to young children almost any time, but generally start to appear around the ages of 12 to 15 months and continue until about three years of age when toddlers are beginning to discover their independence. There is no magic cure for tantrums, but the following tips may help to prevent some of the unwanted behaviour.

Tantrums may appear more frequently when your child is

- hungry
- tired
- bored
- overstimulated
- exposed to aggressive behaviour
- frustrated
- lacking enough large muscle play time
- not feeling well, or
- has had too many sweets

So, plan to avoid these situations whenever possible. Young children have trouble with impulse control. More than anything else, your child needs your help to get out of the situation:

- Be calm and cautious that you are not losing your cool and not giving in.
- Try to let the tantrum happen in a quiet place.
- Do not leave your child; stay until they she has calmed down.
- Do not try to initiate a conversation during the tantrum.
- Do not punish your child when the storm has passed.

Always remember to notice and reward the positive behavior (e.g., say "thank you for walking instead of running").

## Separation anxiety

This starts to appear around 15 to 18 months. Allow children to have transitional objects of comfort, such as their favourite teddy bear, and never sneak away without saying good-bye. This just reinforces that you may disappear unexpectedly and leaves your child feeling even more insecure. Say good-bye, add a hug and some reassuring words, and then leave. Some children may benefit from role-playing the scenario before the event. Parent and child can 'practise' saying good-bye. Using role reversal, allow the child to be the mommy or daddy, and the parent to become the child. This reduces the child's fear and allows him to feel more in control of the situation. Young children may not have the language skills needed to express their fears, but continue to encourage conversations that allow you to talk about the scenario. When reassuring your child that you will return, use events that happen routinely in the child's day. For example, refer to "after lunch" rather than "one o'clock" as young children do not yet understand specific time. ■

Beth Broad, E.C.E., BA is supervisor of the Healthy Families program with the Children's Cottage in Calgary, Alberta.



# Top 10 Tips for a Healthy, Happy Family

The following tips will give you some great ideas to try with your own family.

- #1 Give your child time and attention. It is what they need and want.**
  - Go “Old School” – put away all electronic gadgets for a day and see what happens.
  - Make a fort under the table and read a book.
  - Ask your child to help you make a snack; sit and eat it together.
- #2 Play with your child.**
  - Go outside and look for bugs.
  - Use sidewalk chalk to draw a picture or play hopscotch.
  - Meet friends at the park.
  - Find a cardboard box to play in. Be amazed by your child’s imagination.
- #3 Parenting is a big job; it’s okay to ask for help.**
  - Trade an afternoon of childcare with a trusted friend or neighbour
  - Learn about the networks of people and resources ready to help.
  - Share a smile and a kind word when you see a parent out with their child.
- #4 Make health and well-being a priority.**
  - Getting enough sleep means happier days for you and your child.
  - Take your child to the grocery store and choose a new fruit or vegetable to try.
  - Teach your child the words for their feelings (sad, happy, mad).
- #5 Make time for family and traditions.**
  - Make memories by eating and talking together.
  - Look at photos together, and tell your children a story about when they were little.
  - Think about an activity that was special to you as a child and repeat it with your family...or start a new tradition!
- #6 Value the time you spend with your child.**
  - Talk, sing, read and play with your child.
  - Find healthy ways to relax together.
  - Show your child you care by giving hugs, playing on the floor together and saying “I LOVE YOU.”
- #7 Provide love and limits.**
  - Provide routines for your child, but leave room for the unexpected.
  - Let your child try something new.
  - Expect your children will change as they grow and learn.
- #8 Have confidence in your parenting and take care of yourself.**
  - Seek information from people and sources you respect, and then trust your judgement.
  - Go for a walk with a friend or your partner.
  - Forget perfection – aim for your best.
- #9 Build strong relationships in your family every day.**
  - Make sure your family hears:  
I believe in you.  
I trust you.  
I know you can handle it.  
You are listened to.  
You are cared for.  
You are important to me.

*Source: Barbara Coloroso*
- #10 Support your children as they learn and grow.**
  - Play on the floor with your baby, and be active with older children.
  - When your child needs you, respond quickly and sensitively.
  - Expose your child to new experiences.
  - Read, talk and listen.

Provided by Marianne Dickson, executive director, Wild Rose Community Connections. Used with permission of Foothills Children's Wellness Network. [www.foothillsnetwork.ca](http://www.foothillsnetwork.ca)

## Coming up

The next issue of Connections will focus on **Healthy Parenting Strategies**. If you would like to submit an article or resource for this topic, please contact the AHVNA office by **May 15, 2013**.

## Hearing from you

*Connections* is published three times per year by the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association. We welcome comments, questions and feedback on this newsletter. Please direct any comments to Lorraine Roloff, AHVNA provincial director, by phone at 780.429.4787 or by email to [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org).

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Publications Mail Agreement No. 41387565

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