

## **PRE-SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

Dealing with the constant demands and needs of the pre-school child is one of the biggest tests parents face. Worn down by the constancy of it all or when faced with a crisis situation parents so often resort to either the way they were dealt with themselves as children, or the habits they've got into - which may not be the parenting practise they wish to use. It's a natural reaction - but it's acting first and thinking later, and doesn't take into account the consequences of these actions.

Homegrown spoke with Jenny Hale from Parenting with Confidence who runs a series of lectures over a six-week period called 'Toolbox' which gives parents of pre-schoolers tools to engage co-operation with their young children which then creates an atmosphere of harmony and working together as a family.

Creating a positive family atmosphere takes energy and effort. However in the long run it will actually save a parent a lot of energy and tension. It's easier on parents to spend the time learning to use these methods (tools) than it is to be in constant battle and strife with their children. It is a wise investment and means that parents can spend more time enjoying their children and building a good relationship with them.

There are a few steps involved in using these methods. Firstly a parent acknowledges that what they're doing is ineffective or creates an unhappy environment. Then they're keen to learn new ways of operating. They identify what is not working and then they're willing to practice new ways.

They work at one at a time. At first it can seem awkward and unnatural but after regular use, it becomes more natural and eventually it becomes an automatic and easy response.

In the Toolbox Parenting Groups Jenny provides Prompt Sheets to remind parents what to do, questions they need to ask themselves etc. She suggests parents hang these on the inside of a cupboard in the kitchen or similar, so that in a time of crisis they can quickly refer to it for ideas rather than reverting to old and inappropriate methods. There's also a manual, which is a reference tool to go back to when they're not sure what to do.

Parents are so often told what not to do. Many parents carry a sense of shame and inadequacy. Jenny aims to give parents a number of tools that work and are practical and positive. Parents will gladly drop what is not working if they have a workable solution, skill or strategy to use.

The Toolbox groups do not focus on what not to do, but rather what to do. This means parents feel encouraged not discouraged. They see possibilities not negatives.

In order to implement these tools effectively, parents will need time and there may be some inconvenience. The big picture is worth it though, she says. Less time nagging, growling,

shouting, reminding, lecturing, doing the job yourself and getting totally wound up. More time and energy to enjoy your family!

These are some of the ways you can change your behaviour:

### **Tone of voice**

No pleading, fussing, nagging. Keep a lilt in your voice - speak lower. Take the fight out of the voice. Our voice affects the atmosphere - stir spreads stir, calm spreads calm.

### **Mistakes are opportunities**

When your child mucks up - use it positively. Consider it a teachable moment. Give children another chance.

Empower them to see themselves as capable problem solvers. Get them thinking about what to do if an accident or even something intentional happens. Too often we take over and sort the situation out ourselves. A child ends up not learning much except that Mum or Dad will do it, and I am a naughty person.

Good examples:

"Jasmine I see marks on the table. What can be done to get the table looking clean again? You get the cloth and I'll get the Jif."

"Oops - the book's been ripped. What can be done to fix it?"

### **Use of the impersonal**

Let your child know decisions are made according to a rule - you are not picking on them. You are simply following the rules. This is great for strong-willed children who will fight with being told what to do. They respond so much better to a non-direct approach, which is inclusive, but not attacking.

Good examples:

"Blocks are for building with."

"We draw on paper."

" We sit down to eat our lunch."

### **Choices**

We set the limits but provide choices within those limits - use this method to give independence and to show you value their opinions. It feeds self-esteem and a growing need to think for themselves. Great win/win situation.

Good examples:

Pyjamas: "Do you want to wear your blue pyjamas or the ones with the dinosaurs on them?"

Fruit: "Would you like a banana or an apple?"

Crossing the road: "Would you like to hold my hand shall I carry you across?" Reading: "Do you want to read this story or that one?"

### **Thinking words vs fighting words**

This needs lots of practice! By not employing fighting words children don't have to go on the defensive or fight our words.

Bad: "If you don't put those toys away I'll &&&" vs &

Good: "We can have a story as soon as the toys are in the basket."

Bad: " Don't you talk to me in that tone of voice or I'll ..." vs Good: "I'll be happy to talk to you as soon as your voice is as quiet as mine."

### **Say Yes instead of No and Do instead of Don't**

"No" is said too often. "Yes" can be used successfully and once again a child does not have to fight our words.

A child asks: "Can I have a lolly?"

You can say "No" or "Yes certainly, you may have one after dinner."

A child asks: "Can I watch TV?"

You can say "No" or "We will put TV on after your bath"

Try telling your child what he/she can do. It's much simpler for them to do it in the first place - there's no undoing involved.

"Sit on the chair please" is better than "Don't stand on the chair"

"Use your knife and fork Sam" is better than "Don't use your fingers Sam."

### **Use of the phrase: "In our Family we &&&"**

This is a great way to keep the "team feel" going. Good for rules, safety, security.

"In our family we eat sitting down." "In our family we use our hands for kindness."

Children love to sense that they are part of a team - connected by unique traditions and rules that make sense to them.

Include rituals and traditions in your daily activities - it builds teams and close families. Brings security to children in a changing world.

### **DIANE LEVY: ENCOURAGING SELF-DISCIPLINE**

Parenting pre-schoolers is one of the most physically and emotionally demanding jobs there is. Once your children start school though new challenges appear - physically demanding becomes mentally demanding.

Children are able to do things for themselves now, but they can easily become non-compliant. Once again parents can easily fall into the trap of yelling, sarcasm, threatening etc.

Homegrown talked to family therapist, counsellor and parenting coach, Diane Levy, who takes us through typical family situations and tells us how to respond to them in ways that will result in our school-age children becoming independent human beings and make for happy families who all work together. Diane's book "Of Course I Love you& NOW GO TO YOUR ROOM" promotes parenting strategies that are applicable to all ages. (Although if you start early you'll have less of a problem when the child is older!)

Diane is a psychology graduate, working as a family therapist, counsellor, parenting coach and writer. She was for thirty years a behaviourist, believing, as did many in her profession that

reward punishment could change a child's behaviour. Various influences caused her to change her view and now she sees parenting goals underpinned by the two main tasks.

- To support our children as and so that they experience a wide range of emotions (happy sad, angry, frustrated, furious, delighted) in socially appropriate ways i.e. **emotional independence**.
- To limit our children's inappropriate behaviour so that they behave appropriately and with **self discipline**.

## EMOTIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Care more intervene less - if children ask for help, then you offer advice.

Scenario:

A child comes home from school and is full of blame for a teacher. "That stupid \*\*\*\* teacher, made me stay in after school because I was talking. All I was doing was answering a question Sammy asked me. It's so unfair. Then I had to walk home on my own".

DO:

- **Empathise:** "What a pain, it must have spoilt your day"
- **Give them a cuddle:** as is age-appropriate, be openly supportive.

DON'T:

- **Blame:** " Well serves you right, you've always got too much to say".
- **Criticise:** "Trust you, you always get into trouble" or "Will you not swear all the time - anyone would think you're brought up in the gutter."
- **Distract:** "Shall I make you a nice hot chocolate and let's forget about it??"
- **Explain:** "Well these things happen dear, you understand the teacher's point of view don't you - they just get sick of the noise&"
- **Problem solve:** "I will have a word with that little Sammy - that will get him to keep his trap shut" or "Shall I have a word with your teacher, it wasn't really your fault dear".

The purpose of a child telling you their concerns is not so you can solve their problems. But by behaving with empathy you create room for them to solve their own problems; you let them experience the emotions themselves and work them through.

If they do ask for your assistance then you can offer them advice

## SELF DISCIPLINE

"A child who is extremely noncompliant eventually begins to sabotage the relationships in their life. It is important that that child learns compliance at home. A child must obey rules or do as they're told so they develop self-discipline."

The above quote from Diane's book describes the outcome of a child who lacks discipline, which is undesirable ultimately for the child. So how is discipline instilled in a child? The first

step is to get him/her to obey rules e.g. no eating in the TV room. The second step is doing what you're told. Both these can be achieved.

"A child who learns compliance in the home will not only have a better relationship with parents, teachers and friends, but it is also on the road to becoming a self-disciplined adult".

Diane describes the uncooperative child as exhibiting three methods of not doing what you want done.

- **Anger:** "God mum do it yourself, you're just a housewife with nothing better to do."
- **Whiney/Sad:** "It's not fair, you always expect me to have a tidy room, none of my friends have to do that" or "It's my favourite TV show I can't do it Mummmmmmm"
- **Distancing:** This is a more difficult one, the child sort of doesn't hear you or they say "Yeah sure, soon, I'll pick them up later" which of course they never do.

The method described below is an alternative to the traditional combination of yelling, growling, explaining & punishing.

#### **Scenario:**

"Come on Lucy let's get these dishes done". Or "Lucy pick up the dirty clothes from the floor of your room and put them in the laundry".

#### **Diane's method:**

**Ask:** a child to do some thing "Put your clothes in the laundry".

Wait 10sec

**Tell:** By moving into their space tell them again what you want done.

Wait 10 sec

**Act:** (with emotional distance) This involves distancing yourself from the child until he/she changes his/her mind. For older children an appropriate response is, when they want you to take them say to tennis, your reply could be "Yes, we can go when you've put your clothes in the laundry".

#### **ANNABELLE'S RECIPES**

##### **DELICIOUS FRUIT CRUMBLE**

- 4-5 large apples, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 cup raisins or 1 cup frozen blueberries
- a squeeze of lemon juice
- 3-4 tbsp brown sugar
- A drizzle of maple syrup (opt)
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup coconut



1 generous piece of orange zest  
2 tbsp brown sugar  
1 tsp cinnamon  
150g butter  
600ml Meadow Fresh Custard  
Meadow Fresh Thickened Cream for garnish.

#### METHOD:

Place the apples and other fruit in a baking dish, squeeze lemon juice over the fruit and sprinkle the brown sugar and/or maple syrup over the apples.

Place the oats in the food processor and with the motor running add the flour, coconut, orange zest, brown sugar, cinnamon in a food processor and add the butter and process till crumbly. To do this by hand, simply run the mixture between your fingers. Try not to work the mixture too much, or it will end up like pastry.

Scatter over the fruit and bake for 50-60 mins at 180degC. The top will be golden and the fruit soft and bubbling. Serve with custard and cream. Go to [www.meadowfresh.co.nz](http://www.meadowfresh.co.nz) for more info

#### BOOK

"Serpents of Arakesh", by V M Jones (age 8 - 12)

There have been many contenders for that elusive Harry Potter crown, some of which have been worthy of it and others that have fallen short of the mark.

"The Serpents of Arakesh", by V M Jones, is a great, if not the best example of a book that could have children fall in love in a similar fashion. There's a likeable, sympathetic central character (another orphaned boy, but how else do they have adventures without their parents?).

There's a quest to fulfill, interesting puzzles to try and work out, and a group of children to support and befriend our hero. This is the first of four, but is a complete tale within itself as each of the Harry Potter books are.

Even better news is that it's by a New Zealand author, who will surely become a big name internationally.

Book reviews by The Children's Book Shop.

#### WEBSITE

[www.hhmi.org/coolscience](http://www.hhmi.org/coolscience) (5-10 yrs)

A little site for the little scientist or just to answer those endless 'whys' & 'hows' from curious minds. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has designed it.

There are five different areas to visit where children can investigate those tricky biological questions by following step-by-step activities, which explain scientific principles.

It involves children in doing their own exploring to find the answers while having fun at the same time.

Websites reviewed by the Children and Teens department of Auckland City Library.