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**Disciplining your Toddler**

The best way to prevent aggressive behavior is to give your child a stable, secure home life with firm, loving discipline

**General advice…**

* Discipline is a necessary part of parenthood
* As a parent, you must teach your child how to behave
* Try to teach your child to express their feelings through words
* Discipline is most effective if it takes place on an ongoing basis
* Everyone who cares for your child should agree on the rules your child is expected to observe and the response if your child disobeys
* Reprimand your child immediately when he/she breaks an important rule so that he/she knows exactly what they did wrong

**The power of positive reinforcement…**

* Offer praise and genuine affection for all positive and appropriate behaviors
* If your child feels encouraged and respected (instead of demeaned and embarrassed) he/she is more likely to listen, learn, and change when necessary
* It is always more effective to positively reinforce desired behaviors and to teach children behaviors rather than just say “stop” or “no”
* Always reinforce and praise behavior when your child is demonstrating kindness and gentleness

**Helpful strategies…**

* Try not to bribe, but distracting your child from a certain behavior is okay
* *Natural consequences*: let your child see what will happen if he/she does not behave (as long as it does not place him/her in any danger)
  + Example: if your child keeps dropping his/her cookies on purpose, he/she will soon have no more cookies left to eat – he/she will soon learn not to drop his/her cookies
* *Logical consequences*: step in and create a consequence
  + Mean what you say, follow through right away
  + Be firm and respond in a calm way
  + Example: tell your child if he/she does not pick up their toys, you will put them away for the rest of the day
* *Withholding privileges*: take away something your child likes if he/she does not behave
  + Never take away something that your child truly needs (i.e. a meal)
  + Choose something that your child values
  + Choose something related to the misbehavior
  + For children younger than 6, withhold privilege right away
* *Time-Out*: technique that works well when a specific rule is broken
  + Works best for children ages 2 to 5 (can be used on children as young as one)
  + Set rules ahead of time
  + Choose a time-out spot
    - “Boring” place with no distractions
  + Give your child one warning before placing him/her in time-out
  + Briefly explain what he/she did wrong
  + Once your child is sitting quietly, set the timer – one minute for every year of your child’s age
  + Allow child to resume activity when time is up – you do not need to further discuss inappropriate behavior

**And remember…**

* Be aware of what your child can and cannot do
* Think before your speak
* Be realistic
* Do not give in
* Work toward consistency
* Pay attention to your child’s feelings
* Always watch your own behavior around your child
* If you must discipline, do not feel guilty or apologize

**Why spanking is not the best choice…**

* Even though spanking may seem to “work” at first, it loses its impact after a while
* Because most parents do not want to spank, they are less likely to be consistent
* Spanking increases aggression and anger instead of teaching responsibility
* Parents may intend to stay calm but often do not, and then regret their action later
* Spanking can lead to physical struggles and even grow to the point of harming the child
* Children who are spanked are most likely to become adults who are depressed, use alcohol, have more anger, hit their own children, hit their spouses, and engage in crime and violence
* Spanking teaches a child that causing others pain is okay if you’re frustrated or want to maintain control – even with those you love
* A child is not likely to see the difference between getting spanked by his parents and hitting a sibling or another child when he doesn’t get what he wants

Source: Discipline and Your Child (Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics)