

DISCIPLINE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS Part 1

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The surest way to positively shape your child's behavior is to create strong family values and clear boundaries. Kids need to be trained to meet family expectations and praised often for getting them right. Kids also need to know the consequences for not complying with these. When they know the consequences and do not conform, then they themselves have chosen the consequences and the discipline that follows. When the parent is not consistent with the consequence, then the disciplinary process falls apart.

All children are special. They need parents who care enough to train their kids from toddlers, to become law-abiding, self-motivated, self-disciplined, caring, contributing members of society. It is an irresponsible parent who will indulge their child by not giving them boundaries or expectations.

With special needs children, their needs for love and discipline are the same. It is understandable for parents of special needs children to be so grateful their child survived thus far, that they sometimes do not want to burden them with any further negative experiences. Sometimes a parent's feeling of guilt for their child's disability will cause them to give their child the easiest road they can in life – one without boundaries and discipline.

Let me say this. ALL children want praise and affirmation. They want to know that the way they act is acceptable. They want boundaries. They want you to say, "No!", sometimes. That includes special needs kids. I have never seen children so well behaved, as the special needs classes in the Middle School I was at for 6 years recently. Those children were given very clear classroom rules and they experienced consequences for non-compliance. One or two have even been arrested just like the other school kids. Kids know they are loved when consistent discipline is in place.

Expressed love and discipline are equally important in a child's life whether they have special needs or not. Training special needs kids to expected behaviors may take longer but you both will experience a much better quality of life when you succeed. Some special needs may require adapted expectations according to their level of disability, but there is no excuse for unacceptable behavior. I think sometimes we underestimate these kids' ability to understand.

There are many effective methods of discipline and it is just a matter of trying various methods until you find one that suits your child. There's the time-out chair; being sent to their room; writing a letter of apology if they are able, or giving a verbal apology; removing favorite items which have to be earned back; no privileges until a set chore has been completed to your satisfaction; some kind of community service if able; physical exercise if able; bringing the violation to a

family meeting; signing a behavior contract suitable to their situation; going to bed earlier for a given period of time; removal of privileges; restricted telephone, TV, computer or stereo usage; and grounding.

Children deserve respect. They will gain respect when parents train them, through a balance of love and discipline, to act in an acceptable manner at home, school, workplace and the community at large.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.