

TEACHING YOUR KIDS ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

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One of the most important things that individuals need to realize in life is that there are consequences for almost every choice we make. If we choose right, then the consequence will be good, but if we do not make a wise choice the results will be unfavorable.

Many parents fall into the trap of sheltering their kids from negative consequences. We want to save our 'little lambs' from all the nasty things that could happen to them in their lifetime. Unfortunately, we are not doing them any favors by shielding them. The big wide world works on the principle that we have to take responsibility for the choices we make.

Kids need boundaries and they love it when you set high expectations for them, because they know that when they make a concerted effort they will be rewarded by you saying, "Well done!"

Decide what kind of consequences you find acceptable. Here are some ideas: grounding, denial of privileges, extra chores, time out, research write-offs, community service and physical exercise. Next, decide which consequences match the offense. If you feel strongly about honesty and respect, then save the most serious consequences for those values. Some consequences are age-sensitive or may not work on a particular child. It is just a matter of trial and error until you get something that works. The important thing is that you do issue a consequence for undesired behaviors.

Here are some guidelines for issuing consequences:

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- a) Know exactly what you expect of them.
- b) Know what the consequences are for each violation.
- c) Caregivers know your expectations and consequences, and that they will follow through as you ask them to.
- d) Make sure you back one another up when issuing consequences and if you disagree, wait till later to talk about it.
 - a) You are consistent – both of you.
 - b) You choose your battles. If you find yourself constantly correcting your kids, the home atmosphere becomes negative and children become frustrated because they feel they can never do anything right.
 - c) You use the corrective measure as a training opportunity. Reiterate your expectations so your kids learn from their negative choice.
 - d) You don't make excuses for your child's negative behavior. Yes, it might be way past his bedtime one day, but that should not be an excuse for all the other days.
 - e) You don't fall into the trap of saying, "Just wait till your father gets home!" Whoever is nearest to the situation needs to issue the consequence at the

- time. It is not fair on kids to make them wait, or for an unsuspecting parent to have to come home and issue punishment before they even get to sit down.
- f) The consequences are never humiliating or cause injury. There is a well-known TV drama called, "The Loneliest Runner", a story about a boy who had a bed-wetting problem. His mother used to hang his wet sheets over the balcony and he literally had to beat the bus home from school and get rid of the sheets so his school friends didn't see them. That was cruel indeed, especially when the boy had a genuine problem.
 - g) Once the consequence has been given, do not refer to it again. It is over. Let the child learn from it and move on.
 - h) Don't brood and stay angry with a child. Your children are in the learning phase of their lives and you are the adult. They have to be able to learn by their mistakes.

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.