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Sensible Discipline

Session Length: 2 hours

Objectives

Participants will:

- Examine why children misbehave
- Identify strategies for effective discipline
- Explore common guidance problems
- Practice discipline techniques

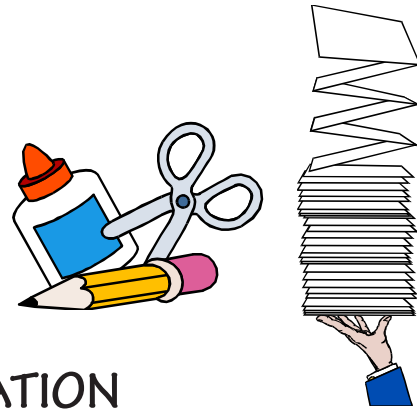
Synopsis

Discipline involves strategies for guidance that are aimed at decreasing unwanted behaviors. This session is designed to help participants learn techniques for effective and fair discipline, including ignoring, time out, and natural and logical consequences as discussed by Crary (1993). In addition, the reasons why children misbehave are discussed and common discipline problems are explored. Participants are encouraged to practice discipline strategies and explore their application with their children.

Session Outline



Procedure	Time
Welcome/Session overview	10 minutes
Homework review	15 minutes
Why do children misbehave?	15 minutes
Discipline basics	40 minutes
Planning and practice	30 minutes
Concluding ideas	05 minutes
Homework	05 minutes
Total Time for Session 6	120 minutes



MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- ▶ **Here's what you will need to have ready for the group:**
 - **SELF-STUDY** – The Appendix (pp. 197–) contains short articles on child development and parenting issues for additional reading. Likewise, the Resources (pp. 187–190) and References (p. 191) sections can direct you to other materials for self-study.
 - **COPIES OF MATERIALS** – Make copies of the following hand-outs, located at the end of the session:
 - *Why Children Misbehave* (p. 137)
 - *Sensible Discipline Techniques* (p. 138)
 - *Steps for Sensible Discipline* (p. 139)
 - *Sample Scenarios* (p. 140)
 - *What Experts Say About Spanking* (p. 141)
 - *Parent's Diary* (p. 142)
 - *Session Six Evaluation* (p. 143)
 - **SUPPORT MATERIALS** – Equip meeting room with a flipchart and easel, eraser board, or chalkboard. If you are using a flipchart, have masking tape or push pins available to hang completed pages for easy reference. Have extra pens, pencils, and paper available in case participants need them.

PROCEDURE



10 Minutes

WELCOME / SESSION OVERVIEW

1 Welcome participants as they arrive.

2 Introduce the session:

- Today's session is about a key parenting concern—discipline. The term discipline is often confused with punishment. But as we'll discuss today, it's better to think of discipline as teaching rather than as punishment or “pay back” for doing bad. Helping children learn good behavior requires guidance and fair discipline.
- Discipline is an issue all parents grapple with. Fortunately, there has been a lot of study of discipline strategies. Although there is no “magic bullet” for correcting behavior problems, there are many sensible, tested techniques that parents can rely on. We'll examine some of these today and explore how and when to use them with different aged children.
- We'll also discuss some of the reasons why children misbehave in the first place.
- Before we get started, let's review the homework task.



15 Minutes

HOMEWORK REVIEW

3 Review homework. Encourage a brief discussion using some of the following questions:

- It was suggested that you practice using some of the guidance techniques we have covered, and you were given a **Guidance Plan** worksheet to help you get organized. Let's talk about the assignment.
 - ? *What specific concerns and goals did you identify on your plan?*
 - ? *What guidance techniques did you decide to use?*

- ? *How did it work out? Was it different from what you would have thought? In what way?*
- ? *How about an attempt that didn't work well? What happened? What did you learn?*
- ? *What guidance technique do you see as the most useful?*

4 Thank participants for their willingness to try the assignment. Encourage them to continue practicing guidance techniques.



15 Minutes

WHY DO CHILDREN MISBEHAVE?

5 Lead into a discussion of misbehavior in children using some of the following points:

- Why do children misbehave? That has been the eternal question of parents since time began.
- Contrary to what you might think sometimes, children do not misbehave just to get on your nerves. There are many reasons for misbehavior, and the child's age and temperament may play a part.
- It may help you to remember not to take the child's misbehavior personally. A first step in coming to terms with a child's misbehavior is to stand back from it a little in order to get perspective. Understanding why a child is acting badly can give you valuable clues about how to deal with it.
- So let's begin by looking at some things we know about why children act up.



Handout,
p. 137

6 Distribute *Why Children Misbehave* handout and review the points. Encourage questions and cover some of the following points:

- Children often misbehave for the simplest of reasons - they are tired, hungry, sick, angry, afraid, or discouraged. Attending to the child's needs (offering a snack, encouraging quiet time) or helping the child with his feelings (active listening, reassurance) may be all that is needed in some cases to deal with problem behavior.

- It's not always possible to know the motive for a child's misbehavior. When the problem behavior is not associated with a child's basic needs or feelings, there may be other reasons to consider. These are attention, power, revenge, and inadequacy.
- Most parents are aware that misbehavior sometimes comes from a child's desire for attention. Many types of attention-seeking behavior annoy parents, especially when they keep happening. For example, when reprimanded the child stops the behavior immediately, but then she slowly edges back to the offending behavior or activity. After being told "Don't bang on the table with your fist," the child (whose motive is adult attention) waits a few minutes, then begins to kick the table with her feet! Giving attention to this kind of annoying behavior will usually cause it to increase (after all, the child is being "rewarded" with sought after adult attention when she does the behavior). We'll talk about discipline strategies for this type of behavior later today.
- Children also misbehave over power issues. They want to call the shots and be in control. The usual parental response to power-seeking misbehavior is anger. Parents will either give in (in frustration) or dominate (show who's boss). In reality, both kinds of response reinforce this type of misbehavior because they send the message that power is important to win or lose. Experts recommend responses that side-step the power struggle and encourage mutual problem solving.
- Children may sometimes act badly for revenge. Children may turn to revenge when their needs for attention or power are not being met satisfactorily. Many parents are hurt or angered by their child's obviously vengeful behavior and may respond by displaying their hurt feelings or retaliating against the child. Both responses contribute to the problem because they send the message that the child's vengeful behavior has hit home. It's best for parents to refuse to act hurt, find ways to build trust in the relationship, and increase the child's feeling of being loved and being valued.
- Sometimes children misbehave because they feel inferior or inadequate. The behavior may be confined to one area where the child feels she can't succeed (e.g., refusing to do math homework) or it may affect several areas. Parents may despair and feel helpless when they suspect that feelings of inferiority are behind their child's

bad behavior. Many parents, desperate to help, begin to pity or overprotect the child. A more effective strategy might involve finding ways to reinforce any attempts at positive behavior, initiative, and problem solving made by the child. Active listening can be a useful tool for helping children open up and talk about their feelings. If a parent suspects that feelings of inadequacy are causing the child to feel depressed, demoralized, or hopeless, then consultation with a pediatrician or mental health professional might be a good idea.



40 Minutes

DISCIPLINE BASICS

7 Introduce the discussion of discipline techniques using some of the following points:

- We mentioned this last week, and it's worth saying again. It is usually easier and more effective to increase good behavior than to decrease bad behavior. However, there are times when parents need to grab the bull by the horns, so to speak, and do something concrete to decrease bad behavior.
- Each child is different, and discipline techniques that work well for one child may not work with another. Also, children are constantly changing, so guidance and discipline strategies will change as the child learns and matures.
- Attention is a powerful reinforcer. Many of the discipline techniques that are the most effective with small children involve managing attention (e.g., paying a lot of attention to good behaviors and very little attention to annoying behaviors).
- Enforcing consequences when bad behavior occurs is another important discipline technique. The use of consequences can be applied successfully to children of all ages.
- Removing privileges, limiting activities, or having the child make amends (e.g., cleaning up a mess or replacing something that was destroyed) are examples of workable consequences. Spanking or threatening to spank are not effective consequences for helping children learn.

- The purpose of any guidance or discipline technique is to teach. Responding to bad behavior with spanking or hitting diminishes the parent's ability to be an effective teacher. A child may stop a particular behavior after being spanked or threatened with a spanking; however, children don't seem to learn much about self-control, decision-making, or responsibility as a result of spanking. This type of learning requires a more thoughtful response from parents. Keep in mind, we are not saying that spanking is always "wrong" or "bad," but rather that it is not as effective as other strategies for teaching children the self-control they will need to get along in the world.
- Let's review some basic strategies that have been shown to be more effective in helping children stop bad behavior and learn good behavior.



Handout,
p. 138

8 **Distribute *Sensible Discipline Techniques* handout and cover each of the strategies. Encourage questions. Model how techniques may be used with children of different ages. Include some of the following points:**

■ **IGNORING (TUNE OUT)**

- Many parents have a hard time understanding why ignoring a bad behavior is considered a form of discipline. Others say "When my child is acting up, I can't just ignore her. It's not right."
- It's helpful to remember a couple of things. First, when you use ignoring or the "tune out" technique, you are not really ignoring the child. Rather, you are making a decision based on what you observe to not reward the child with attention when she behaves badly.
- Using the tune out technique is not appropriate for all discipline problems. However, it is very effective for annoying behaviors that you would prefer that your child not use, for example, whining, pouting, interrupting, talking back, begging, or crying. It's well suited to behaviors that are aggravating but not dangerous or destructive. Here's how it works:
- Decide what behavior you want to decrease. Commit yourself to tolerating the behavior while your child is learning to control

it. Be honest. If you know you won't be able to last long ignoring the behavior, choose another discipline technique. Ignoring is not for the faint of heart.

- The next time the behavior happens, ignore the child. Don't look at her or talk to her. Turn away, don't make eye contact, don't show feelings, literally "tune her out."
- Your child will probably start acting up even more loudly and persistently than before. Do not look at her, make eye contact, or give any attention.
- When the behavior stops, or the child begins doing what you've requested, give plenty of reward and praise and attention. This is an important step, because it helps the child learn that behaving the way you want can be rewarding.

■ TIME-OUT

- The "time-out" technique is well-known and has been used by parents for many years. It's an updated version of a popular parenting technique from times gone by - making the child sit in the corner.
- Time-out is used to interrupt unacceptable behavior by removing the child from the scene until he regains control. Time-out is helpful for stopping behavior before it escalates into chaos.
- When a child continues to engage in unacceptable behavior after being asked to stop, he is sent to a quiet room or area of the house alone and told to stay there until he calms down.
- A time-out is used to teach self-control and consequences, not to punish. The time-out should be short enough to be meaningful, but not so long that it's a prison sentence (3 to 5 minutes is long enough for most small children). A general guideline would be one minute of time-out for each year of age. Remember that to a young child, a minute can feel like an hour. If the time-out period is too long, the child may forget what led to it.
- Choose a time-out room that is secluded enough so that the child won't be able to provoke others or get attention, but

close enough so that you can monitor him. A hallway or a quiet, dull room are good locations.

- Before using a time-out, make sure your child understands concepts like “waiting” and “being quiet.” Children can usually understand this concept between ages 3 and 4, although some may understand it earlier.
- Before using time-out for the first time, explain it to your child. Tell him what a time-out is and when it will be used. Walk your child through the first couple of time-outs. Count only the quiet time and show your child how you will keep time. Let him know that the clock begins when he is quiet—yelling, whining, or pleading will only result in a longer stay. A kitchen timer may be useful for keeping up with the minutes.
- Tell your child when the time-out is over. It’s a good idea to follow the time-out with a brief discussion. Ask him to tell you why he had to go to time-out and what he will do differently next time. By talking about it you can make sure that your child knows what he did that resulted in the time-out and what choices he might make next time that would have better outcomes. Praise and reinforce good behavior when your child returns from a time-out.
- Time-out is most effective when presented as a choice, for example, “Obey my directions or go to time-out.” It can be effective when the child is emotionally “flooded” or out-of-control as a way to help the child learn to manage his own emotions.
- Time-out can be over used. Remember, the length of time must be brief and the parent must stay on top of it. It’s not a good idea to get involved in something else and forget that you left the child in time-out for 30 minutes.

■ NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- Establishing consequences for inappropriate behavior and following through with those consequences every time the bad behavior happens is one of the most effective and loving discipline techniques that parents can use.

- Loving? Yes, loving. In order to get along in the world, children must learn early that choices carry consequences, that behavior is a choice, and that the consequences of poor behavior choices may be unpleasant.
- Applying consequences is an extension of setting limits. Limits are established as part of guidance. However, most children will test the limits, especially older children.
- Using consequences requires plenty of thought and planning. Parents can improve the effectiveness of this technique by having a clear idea about their goals and what they want their child to learn and remember.
- The purpose of consequences is learning, not revenge or punishment. Applying consequences and always following through helps teach your child how to be responsible for her own behavior.
- There are two types of consequences—natural and logical.
 - **Natural consequences** are those that help a child learn from the natural order of the physical world (for example, not eating dinner leads to hunger or touching a hot stove will burn your hand). Some natural consequences may be too dangerous to allow to happen or may occur too infrequently to be remembered by the child. In applying natural consequences, the health and safety of the child should always take priority.
 - **Logical consequences** are those that are devised and administered by parents or other caregivers. This type of consequence is used most often in disciplining children. Examples might include loss of privileges (e.g., no television tonight), making amends or repairs (e.g., having to mop the floor after tracking mud on it), or complying with preset family rules (e.g., being more than 10 minutes late for curfew results in losing an hour off next weekend's curfew).
- There are several things to consider when planning how to best use consequences:
 - **Is the consequence reasonable?** Consequences are used to teach, not to punish. It's important to think

seriously about the consequences you may decide to impose. Your child's age, temperament, and needs should influence the consequences you choose. Older children (10 and up) can be involved in helping make decisions about what types of consequences they consider "fair" for their offenses. Not only can they come up with some very good ideas, but when allowed to take part in the decision making they may be more likely to comply without protest.

- **Is the consequence related to the offense?** The most effective consequences are fair and logically related to the "crime." For example, if a child is late for dinner, it's fair and logical that she warm up her own dinner and clean up afterwards. It would not be fair and logical to tell her she must clean her closet as a consequence for being late for dinner.
- **Is the consequence enforceable?** The best way to evaluate if a consequence is enforceable is to honestly ask yourself if the consequence will cost you more work than you want. For example, telling a child "If you don't finish reading that book for your book report, I'm going to sit with you at your desk every evening until you finish it." Or "If you don't stay buckled in your seat all the way to Six Flags, we'll turn around and go home." Remember, consequences will not work at all if you are not prepared to follow-through consistently every time the rule is broken.
- **Is there anger, resentment, or revenge associated with the consequence?** Consequences are most effective if they are devised and presented as calmly and kindly as possible. (Remember, we want to teach, not punish.) If presented with anger, criticism, or blame, or if the consequence is too severe, it loses its punch. The child may end up feeling hurt and resentful and not be able to learn from the experience.



Handout,
p. 139

- 9** **Distribute *Steps for Sensible Discipline* handout, and quickly review the sequence of steps recommended for enforcing time-out and logical consequences.**



30 Minutes

Handout,
p. 140

PLANNING AND PRACTICE

10 Lead participants in practicing discipline techniques and planning how best to use them with their children. A page of sample role play scenarios is provided; however, participants may prefer to volunteer real life situations for practice.

11 Provide direction and feedback as participants practice ignoring, time-out, and natural and logical consequences. Discuss the uses of these techniques with children of different ages and temperaments. It's helpful to allow parents to practice using different discipline techniques on the same discipline problem in order to get a sense of how each technique might work.

12 Discuss the practice session using some of the following questions:

- ? *How did it feel to practice these techniques?*
- ? *Which technique seemed to work best for you?*
- ? *How do you think your child will react to ignoring? To time-out? To logical consequences?*
- ? *What is going to be the most challenging thing for you in applying these discipline techniques?*
- ? *How will you evaluate whether or not these techniques are working? How might you modify them if they don't work?*

13 Thank participants for their work. Reassure them that most parents need time and practice before feeling completely comfortable with new ways of disciplining.



5 Minutes

CONCLUDING IDEAS

14 Provide wrap-up and closure for the session. Highlight some of the following points:

- As you've probably figured out from today's session – discipline is one of the many areas of parenting that requires thought and attention.
- Planning and knowing what will work and what won't work based on your child's temperament and personality are important considerations.
- When many of us were growing up, discipline may have involved spankings. In years past, physical punishment was considered one of the best ways to manage children. Nowadays experts have shown us that there are better ways to get the job done. A carefully thought-out discipline plan is much less likely to damage your relationship with your child than is hitting and spanking.
- The discipline techniques discussed today require more time, energy, and creativity than does physical punishment. The extra effort can be viewed as an investment in your child's future. Through your positive guidance, she will learn problem-solving skills, logical consequences, creative thinking, and self-control. More importantly, she'll develop a stronger sense of trust in others and a healthier self-image (all of which you, as her parent, will have modeled.)
- Remember that making decisions about discipline will be an ongoing activity until your children are grown. Discipline techniques that work when your child is six might not work when he is nine. (It's a good thing parents are so creative and flexible.)



Handout,
p. 141

15 Distribute *What the Experts Say About Spanking* handout. Encourage participants to read and think about the issues raised in the handout.



5 Minutes

HOMework



Worksheet,
p. 142

16 Distribute *Parent's Diary* worksheets. Give the following homework suggestions:

- The homework assignment is to complete a short worksheet. The assignment is to write a few paragraphs about the quality you most want your child to develop in order to lead a successful life. This is an informal essay—spelling and grammar don't count, but your ideas do.

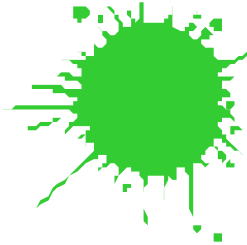
- In addition, think about how you plan to begin using some of the discipline techniques we discussed today. Remember that the planning and thinking through that you do is an important step in making these strategies work. If you feel ready to begin using these ideas, go ahead. If you need some time to digest them, that's okay, too.

17 Thank group members for coming and for their participation. Invite them to return next session.



*Session
Evaluation,*
p. 143

18 Ask participants to complete a *Session Evaluation* form before leaving.



WHY CHILDREN MISBEHAVE



When your child misbehaves, ask yourself:

- Is my child tired?
- Is my child hungry?
- Is my child angry?
- Is my child sick?
- Is my child afraid?
- Is my child discouraged?

Understanding the feelings or needs behind problem behavior will give you clues about how to handle it.

Other reasons for misbehavior



Wanting attention

A good response is to _____

Power struggles

A good response is to _____

Revenge

A good response is to _____

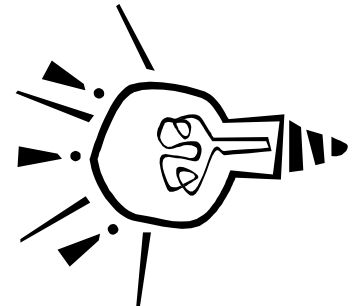
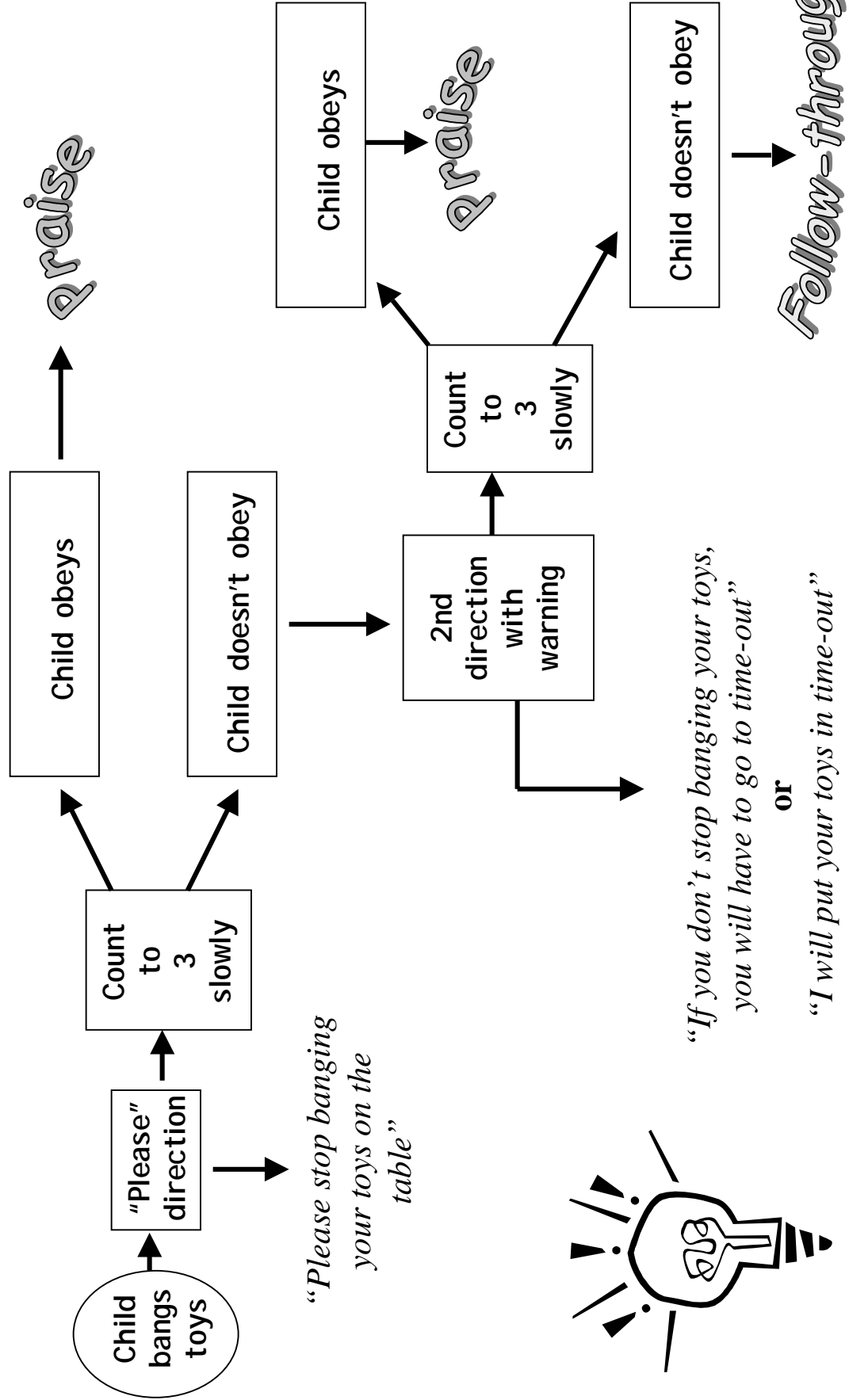
Feeling inadequate

A good response is to _____

SENSIBLE DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES

IGNORING (TUNE OUT)				
Good for	Process	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Whining, pouting, crying, arguing, making noise. Is most effective with younger children.	Tune the child out. Stay busy with your own activities or leave the room for a short time. Avoid eye contact, talking to, or looking at the child.	Requires little effort. Can be very effective. Helps avoid reinforcing problem behavior. Provides an opportunity to praise desired behavior when problem behavior ceases.	On some days, you may need nerves of steel to stick to your resolve. Child may get nosier. Many parents find it a difficult tactic to use in a public setting.	Child demands another Popsicle using a whiney voice. Parent turns away until child asks in a pleasant voice. Once child asks without whining, parent praises the desired tone of voice.
TIME-OUT				
Disobeying, temper tantrums, fighting, arguing, or any problem behavior that parent can't ignore or that indicates the child is not taking control of his actions. Works best with younger children.	Explain time-out before you use it. When problem behavior occurs, place child in a quiet, dull room or designated area for 3 to 5 minutes. Don't start counting time until child is quiet.	Gives both the parent and the child time to cool off. Child experiences an immediate removal from attention. Helps child learn self-control. Helps cut down the frequency of problem behavior.	Requires parent to be patient and consistent. Parent must be firm but gentle, and must not give in to protests or apologies. Requires having a boring, but safe time-out area.	Child pushes another child. After pointing out the problem and allowing a few seconds to obey, parent immediately places child in time-out. Consistent follow-through is the most important part of this technique.
LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES				
Breaking rules, not finishing chores, damaging property, making messes, homework or school problems. Good for children of all ages.	Consequences should be fair and logical. Explain how you will enforce consequences. When problem behavior happens, immediately enforce the consequence. Don't give in to arguments or excuses.	Works quickly and effectively. Older children can be allowed to help set their own consequences. Helps children learn about responsibility and cause and effect. Protects self-esteem of both parent and child.	Requires consistency and monitoring. May be inconvenient sometimes. Technique loses its power if parent cannot follow-through consistently every time the problem behavior occurs.	Child fails to do homework. Parent enforces loss of TV watching for the next day. Consequences should always be fair, related to the problem, and not extreme. In this case, loss of TV is for a day, instead of a week or month.

STEPS FOR SENSIBLE DISCIPLINE



"Please stop banging your toys on the table"

"If you don't stop banging your toys, you will have to go to time-out"
or
"I will put your toys in time-out"

Sample Scenarios for role play or case study

Apply different discipline techniques to these scenarios and discuss the advantages of each one. Use role play to practice what you might say or do for each one, and how you would say or do it.



When asked to come in for dinner, the child says "No! You can't make me!!"

The child lies about how a toy got broken. She broke it, but she blames it on her brother.

When told "it's time to go home now," after playing with a friend, the child throws a tantrum (screaming, yelling, and refusing to leave).

There is a rule against playing in the street. The parent catches the child riding his tricycle in the middle of the street.

The parent is talking on the phone. The child tries to get the parent's attention by whining and figeting.

The parent has set a rule that the child be home by 9:00 p.m. The child comes home at 9:45 p.m.

One of the child's family chores is to take the trash to the curb on trash day. The parent discovers that the child has been "hiding" the trash bags in a garage closet.

After being warned not to play "rough", the child pushes a friend causing the friend to drop and break a favorite toy.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY ABOUT SPANKING

Children's doctors (pediatricians) and psychologists in this country have studied the subject of physical punishment or spanking. They have looked at families that use spanking for discipline and families that don't use it. In a recent report, they strongly recommended that parents learn to use positive discipline techniques instead of spanking. They found the following negative side-effects of using spanking:

In the long run, spanking doesn't really work: Spanking may stop bad behavior when it is happening, but it doesn't prevent bad behavior when the parent isn't around. Using Time-Out and Consequences are better choices for helping children learn to control their own behavior.

Spanking hurts self-esteem: Children who are spanked a lot often start thinking that something must be wrong or "bad" about them. They also begin to think that their parents do not like them very much. These kinds of thoughts damage self-esteem.

Imitation: Children who are spanked a lot may learn that when you are angry, it's okay to hit someone. This is especially true if parents spank when they are angry. Children may learn to vent their anger by hitting other children or pets, or by bullying others with threats.

Fear: Children become afraid of people who use physical punishment, especially when the punishment is harsh or frequent. Parents who spank a lot may notice that their children are nervous and fearful around them. Children who are spanked a lot may be less likely to come to parents for help with their problems because they are afraid or they become withdrawn.

Positive discipline techniques (such as ignoring, setting limits, using Time-Out, and enforcing consequences) require time and patience to master. Most parents who stick with it find these techniques are well worth the effort. When used consistently, these strategies help parents teach their children about responsibility, self-control, and cooperation.



Parent's Diary

Use the space below to write your thoughts on the following topic:

*The most important quality I want my child to develop in order to
lead a successful life is...*

Session Evaluation Partners in Parenting Session 6

INSTRUCTIONS: Please take a minute to give us some feedback about how you liked this session.

1. Use one word to describe your feelings about today's class _____
2. What was the most important thing you learned today?
3. What discipline technique discussed today might work best with your child (children)? Why?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate today's class? (Circle your rating.)

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Poor				Pretty Good					Excellent
5. Do you have any suggestions to help make this class better?