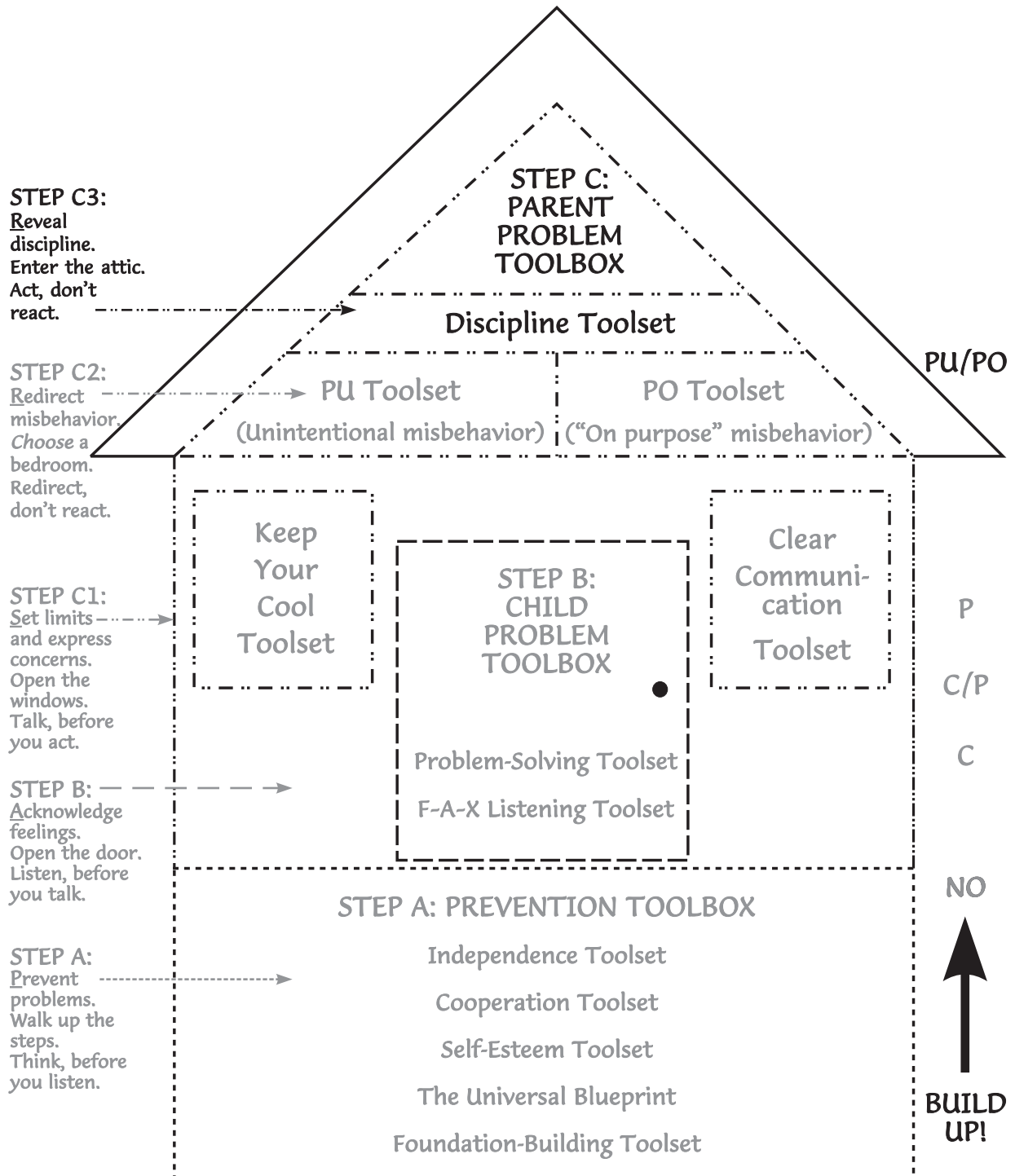


# CHAPTER 13

## DISCIPLINE TOOLSET



## CHAPTER

# 13 DISCIPLINE TOOLSET

*We store items in an attic that we don't use daily but occasionally need. Likewise, the Discipline Toolset is in the attic, because we don't use these tools constantly. We use discipline when other efforts have been unsuccessful or when more serious problems arise.*

*If we are frustrated and don't have the knowledge or skills to properly repair something in our house, we might hit it with the closest tool we can find. Sometimes, this approach can make the item start working again, but we haven't really solved anything and might have caused more damage. Sooner or later, the problem will arise again. It is better to take the time to use the best tool correctly.*

*Some parents lack the knowledge or skills to discipline appropriately. When they are frustrated, they get desperate. Thinking a drastic measure will shock children into obedience, they punish them. While punishment might bring some short-term change, the underlying problem still exists and the punishment itself usually creates new problems. When we use discipline appropriately, we can teach children **self-discipline**, **self-responsibility**, and how to learn from their mistakes.*

## IN THIS CHAPTER

The Discipline Toolset asks us to consider four important parenting ideas:

1. There is a difference between “discipline” and “punishment.” Discipline is the best tool to use if we want to reach our positive, long-term parenting goals.
2. There are four important parts of discipline that must be present for it to be effective. If any parts are missing, it turns our discipline into punishment and/or makes our discipline tools ineffective.
3. There are specific discipline tools we can choose for certain types of problems.
4. With this toolset, we now have all the tools we need to plan the most appropriate response to *any* problem.

## WHEN TO USE THIS TOOLSET

Usually, we use the Discipline Toolset as the last of several attempts to resolve a Parent problem. Sometimes, when we are dealing with extreme behavior, we use the Discipline Toolset as the last part of our three-sentence PASRR response formula. If we use the Discipline Toolset too often or misuse it, the tools lose their effectiveness.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE

As with other terms in *The Parent's Toolshop*, “discipline” has a specific meaning, which is different from “punishment.”

### Punishment

**Punishment is an over-controlling, autocratic parenting method. One of its basic beliefs is that children must feel bad to “learn their lesson.”**

Punishment imposes physical or emotional suffering, such as spanking, slapping, yelling, criticizing, or using guilt trips. It is common to find parenting advice such as “make sure you take away your child’s *favorite* activity” or “make the quarreling children sit together in an *uncomfortable* chair until they work out the problem.” Why restrict a favorite activity if it has nothing to do with the misbehavior? We want to add suffering! Why *not* let children sit in a comfortable chair or a “heart-to-heart corner” like I have in my house? Adding this extra suffering is sure to cause the children to *dread* problem solving, because it is an uncomfortable, punishing experience! Ideally, we want our children to someday sit together voluntarily to resolve problems. We shortchange our children’s abilities when we assume they must suffer to learn.

This idea, that people must feel bad to learn, is illogical. Imagine if every time you sat to read this book, chains whipped around your legs and you could not move from your chair. How would you feel about reading this book? How would you feel about me? Could you concentrate or would you be distracted from the lessons? Any time someone is suffering, it makes learning more difficult and builds resentment toward the person who inflicts the suffering.

**Parents most commonly use punishment to exert power or get revenge.** Most parents wish they could control their children’s behavior and feel angry, hurt, or frustrated when they can’t. Punishment can feel satisfying to angry, frustrated parents, but does not help children learn *self-control* and *self-discipline*. Punishment teaches parents, not children, to be responsible for controlling children’s behavior. It becomes the parent’s job to catch children being good and reward them, then catch them being bad and punish them.

**The most extreme punishments impose physical suffering; other punishments are usually the result of parents misusing discipline.** Slaps across the face or hands, pushing or shoving, grabbing arms, necks, or ears and dragging are all physical forms of punishment that border on abuse. It’s sad, but in many countries, children (and often wives) are viewed as property and parents (or husbands) are allowed, by law, to abuse them.

*Spanking* is a punishment chosen by many parents of young children. Most parents spank when they are frustrated by a situation or because nothing else seems to work. Spanking is usually a reflection of the parent’s lack of skill, patience, self-control, or knowledge. Some parents, however, actually believe spanking is a valuable, effective parenting tool—and some parenting resources even offer rules for spanking. (I won’t!) Spanking teaches fearful obedience to the person who has the most physical power.<sup>1</sup> While spanking seems to quickly curb misbehavior, long-term research studies have found that the more a parent spans a child for misbehaving, the worse, over time, that child behaves.<sup>2</sup>

The most common justification for spanking and physical punishment (also known as “corporal” punishment) is the “Spare the rod, spoil the child” quote from Proverbs. In the 23 Psalm, it says, “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” In both instances, the “rod” is a shepherd’s cane, which the shepherd uses to *guide* the flock, not beat it into submission. Another ancient definition of “rod” is a standard of measurement. Each night, shepherds used a rod to stop each sheep for a health inspection before allowing it to join the other sheep. Using these interpretations, the scripture instructs parents to provide standards and boundaries for children and to lovingly guide them—or children will become spoiled.

## LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF PUNISHMENT

**Punishment is an illusion; it only *seems* to work.** If children stop misbehaving, parents get an immediate payoff, which reinforces the belief that the punishment worked. Sure, sometimes punished children behave, but they are motivated to *avoid negative* results. We want children to *choose positive* behavior because they understand the value of it.

**Punishment reinforces or escalates intentional misbehavior cycles.** Punishment gives misbehavior attention, even if it's negative attention. Since punishment is based on power, it escalates power struggles. Punishment is often a parent's way to get revenge, which escalates revenge cycles. If punishment occurs for even small offenses, children may give up.

**Children become immune to punishment.** Eventually, children develop a defensive "You can't hurt me" attitude. Parents feel their threats and punishments must become increasingly harsh. This increases the risk of the punishment crossing the line into abuse.

**Punishment cancels responsibility.** Once the suffering is over, children think they have paid for their mistake. If they are willing to "do the time," they can again choose to "do the crime." The only lessons children learn from punishment are the importance of power, how not to get caught, and that others are responsible for controlling their behavior. Children don't learn *self-discipline* or to make amends for the results of their actions.

**Before choosing a discipline, ask yourself, "What will this discipline teach?"**

**Physical punishment teaches unhealthy lessons:**

- Superior people have the right to hurt those who are inferior.
- Physical violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts and get revenge.
- It's okay for parents to hit children.
- Parents can do whatever they want, even if it is unreasonable or harmful. Children must do whatever parents say.
- If I hit you because I "love you," then hitting is acceptable in love relationships. That's how people show love.

**Physical punishment breeds violence.** *All* abusive people witnessed or experienced abuse at some time in their lives. They may not like being violent, but they have not learned other ways to express themselves or resolve conflict. The good news is that not all abused children grow up to be abusive adults. They have free will and can make a conscious choice to break the punishment/abuse cycle and learn healthier skills.

If you say, "I spank, but I'm not *abusive*," consider the effects of milder physical punishments. Many nonabusive parents who once used physical punishment make comments like the following:

- "I always slapped my kid's hand, until he started slapping me back."
- "I used to spank my kid, but he's getting too old for that." (Now these parents must either increase the physical punishment or change their whole approach.)
- "I saw my child spanking her doll and yelling at it, the way I yell and spank her."
- "My child hit another child because he didn't get what he wanted. I realized that's what I do!"

Usually, the children are imitating adults (not just parents) who have made a powerful impression on them. For many parents, these experiences are a wake-up call that what they are doing is unhealthy and ineffective.

**Punishment lowers self-esteem.** Punishment hurts. It's difficult for children to understand how anyone who hurts them could also love them. Punished children begin to see themselves as unloved and unlovable. They believe they are worthless because they have been told they are bad people.

**The emotional scars can last a lifetime.** People do not need physical scars to feel abused. Many adults can vividly remember how they felt when they were punished as children. Their obedience was out of fear, not out of respect or from having "learned their lesson." If you ask them *why* they were punished, most cannot remember what they did wrong, only how they felt about the punishment and the punisher.

**A Graduate's Story.** During a group discussion about discipline, a woman said, "When I was a child, my momma would beat me with a switch until I bled. She was mean and abusive and I hated her for it! I didn't learn nothin' from it. My grandma also lived with us and there were lots of times she whipped me with a switch—and I'm glad she did! She wasn't mean and I always learned my lesson. So isn't it okay to whip kids if we aren't mean about it?"

I was surprised by this mother's comparison and decided to explore it further. I asked her, "When your grandmother whipped you, was it just as hard as your mother's whipping?" She said, "Sometimes. There were lots of times she left marks, too, but I learned from her whippin's." Still confused, I added, "Then what was so different about your grandma's whippings?" She explained, "My grandma would sit me on her lap and explain what I done wrong and why it was wrong. Then she told me I had to get a whippin' for it and had me go outside and pick the switch she would use." Now it was making more sense to me. I asked her, "Is it possible that the reason you learned from your grandma's punishment was that she sat you on her lap and taught you right from wrong?" She thought for a second and I think I might have actually seen a light bulb go off above her head. She said "Yes!" So I added, "Do you also think it is possible that if your grandma had those talks with you without the whipping that you also would have learned a lesson?" She willingly nodded her head in agreement. Then I asked one final question, "Looking back, which do you remember more, your grandmother's lessons or the whippings that came after them?" She thoughtfully answered, "the whippings." "So," I concluded, "if you had learned the same lessons without the whipping, do you think you'd remember them better?" "Definitely," she said cheerfully.

Jane Nelsen, author of *Positive Discipline*, sums up the effects of punishment as "The Four R's of Punishment<sup>3</sup>." When parents use punishment, it can have any or all of the following results.

#### THE FOUR R'S OF PUNISHMENT

RESENTMENT ("This is unfair.")

REVENGE ("They are winning now, but I'll get even.")

RETREAT: Reduced self-esteem ("I am a bad person.") or sneakiness ("I won't get caught next time.")

REBELLION ("I'll do it anyway, just to prove who's in control.")

## Discipline

The basic belief of discipline is that children *can learn* from their mistakes without adding extra suffering. In fact, the more one learns, the less one suffers. The suffering children experience in discipline is usually the natural result of what they did. When someone *else* inflicts extra suffering, it turns the discipline into unhealthy, unhelpful punishment.

The word "discipline" comes from the Greek word "disciple." Disciples follow a leader who guides them. The parent's role in discipline, therefore, is that of teacher and leader, not controller. The focus is on solutions and lessons, not imposing consequences. Discipline teaches several important lessons:

- **Behavior is a choice.** Every action has an effect, positive or negative. (This is a universal law of nature!) Therefore, children's behavior *choices* determine whether they will experience positive or negative outcomes. When children choose irresponsible behavior and it does not reward their goals, they see no purpose in continuing to act negatively. If we show them positive ways to meet their goals, they naturally choose these more effective behavior. Poor behavior choices are mistakes that provide opportunities to learn better behavior.

- **Children are responsible for controlling their own behavior.** Parents are responsible for holding children accountable for their behavior choices and helping them see the lesson each mistake holds. With punishment, parents do something *to* children. When trying to overpower or control children, parents decide the discipline *for* them. If parents use these quick fixes rather than long-range teaching, children miss opportunities to learn *self*-discipline. Ideally, we want to involve children and plan the discipline *with* them. Only then will children fully understand their behavior (and its outcome) are within *their* control.

Discipline has “Four R’s”<sup>4</sup> too. For discipline to be effective, it must meet *all* the following criteria.

### THE FOUR R’S OF DISCIPLINE

To be effective, discipline must be:

**REVEALED** ahead of time, whenever possible.

Logically **RELATED** to the behavior.

**REASONABLE** in extent and/or time limit.

Mutually **RESPECTFUL** to children *and* parents.

If *any* of the “Four R’s of Discipline” are missing, it can bring on the “Four R’s of Punishment.”

### DISCIPLINE IS REVEALED, WHENEVER POSSIBLE

If we want *self*-disciplined children, they need to know their behavior is a *choice*. Revealing discipline lets children know what they can expect from their behavior choices—misbehavior has negative outcomes and positive behavior has value. When we reveal these behavior choices and the outcomes, children can make educated decisions about their behavior.

*A Graduate’s Story.* I took my two girls and three other children, all under age five, to swim at a lake. In the car, I realized how difficult it would be to watch so many kids and prevent an accident. As we drove, I revealed my rules for swimming. I said, “It’s important that you stay in the shallow water, because you could drown if the water is too deep. You can walk into the lake until the water touches your bellybutton. Then you need to stop. If you choose to go out farther in the water, I’ll know you’ve decided to sit with me on the beach until you are ready to swim safely.”

When we got to the lake, the kids went into the water. One boy inched his way into the water. He called to me, “Lory! The water’s touchin’ my bellybutton!” Then he stopped. My daughter and another child went out too far. I called to them, “The water is above your bellybutton!” The girls came out of the water and ran over to my towel. They said, “We’ve decided to take a break for awhile.” I was surprised that they said this and knew they probably wanted to save face, so I didn’t add any lectures. They were actually disciplining themselves!

**The most effective discipline is preventive discipline.** Use questions to help children figure out and understand the need for a rule. For example, “What could happen if you ride your bike in the street? (Wait.) So where should you ride your bike?” We can reveal discipline with helpful questions. “If you ride in the street, are you showing you are ready to handle bike privileges responsibly?” (Wait.) We can then present discipline as a choice. “So you can ride your bike on the sidewalk or put the bike away.”

**Revealing discipline differs from making threats.** Threats are power plays. “If you don’t stop \_\_\_\_\_, I’m going to \_\_\_\_\_.” Threats send the message that it is the parent’s responsibility to control the child. Threats challenge children to test the parents’ willingness to follow through. **Revealing**

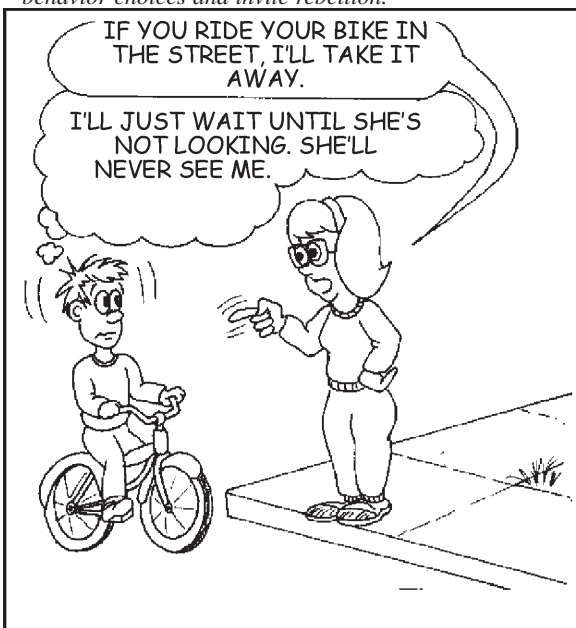
*discipline is most effective if we ask helpful questions such as “What would happen if you did that?”* This helps us avoid lecturing or threatening. If children understand the value of positive behavior, have the skills to behave appropriately, understand the results of negative behavior and *still* make a poor behavior choice, they either forgot (PU) or are testing whether the outcome will really happen (PO). Therefore, consistent follow through is vital. If children complain or accuse parents of being unfair, parents can ask children to think about the choices and outcomes they discussed earlier. Poor behavior choices are a normal part of growing up, but children can learn from these mistakes and make improvements for the future.

Sometimes threats are vague, with no realistic consequence. “If you don’t stop, you’re going to get it!” These are empty threats—parents let off steam, but their words are just hot air. The most common threat is a 1-2-3 threat, “You have until I count to three to do it.” Counting teaches children they don’t have to do “it” the first time parents ask. Children rarely respond at 1, because they know we won’t follow through until we reach 3!

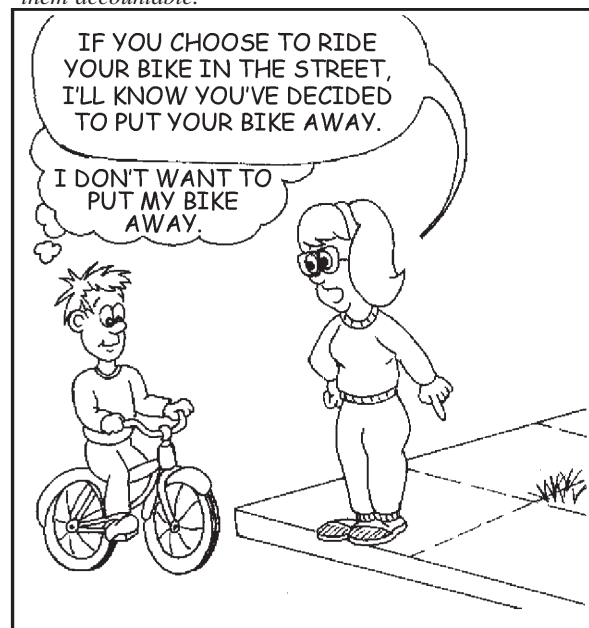
Some threats repeat the same statement in a louder or firmer tone of voice. “Please stop . . . I said, ‘Stop!’ . . . STOP IT OR ELSE!” These threats condition children not to respond unless parents yell or threaten. We might as well say, “Keep it up. I’m not really angry, yet.” Our goal is to have children respond the first time we ask them to cooperate. If we need to say something more than once, we want each statement to make a specific, different, increasingly firm message. Our first sentence invites cooperation (Step A: **P**revent the problem). The second **A**cknowledges their feelings, but **S**ets limits (Steps B and C1). At this point we have made it clear that this behavior is unacceptable. If children misbehave again, they either haven’t mastered the proper behavior (PU) or are doing this to serve a purpose (PO). To **R**edirect the misbehavior, without starting or escalating negative behavior cycles, our third statement **R**eveals their choice—a positive way to meet their purpose or experience the effect of continuing the behavior. This last statement lets children know that the next step, should *they* choose to take it, is discipline.

**Sometimes, we can’t reveal discipline in advance, because we don’t always expect a problem.** When these situations arise and we want to reveal the discipline for repeated misbehavior, we quickly move through the Universal Blueprint’s PASRR formula (detailed above). If the behavior is so severe that immediate discipline is necessary, it is best to use problem solving to discuss the problem and reveal discipline. We learn how to do this later in this chapter.

*Threats make parents responsible for children’s behavior choices and invite rebellion.*



*Respectfully reveal children’s behavior choices and hold them accountable.*



## DISCIPLINE IS LOGICALLY RELATED TO THE SITUATION

If discipline isn't logically related to the misbehavior or lesson children need to learn, it seems like the parent made up an unfair punishment or is trying to get revenge. This shifts the focus away from the lesson to who is in power. Together, these attitudes can cause or escalate power struggles, revenge cycles, and rebellion.

**If the logical connection between a behavior and the effect isn't obvious, state it or ask a helpful question so the child can figure it out.** Otherwise, children don't understand the logic of the discipline.

*A Graduate's Story.* This week, I had a situation where my discipline really backfired, but I can't figure out what I did wrong! My son, Chad, said he'd be home at five o'clock. We needed to eat before we left for church at six o'clock. At five thirty, Chad came home. I said, "We had an agreement that you would be home at five. Hurry up and eat." When six o'clock arrived, Chad had finished his meal, but not his dessert. I told him he couldn't have his dessert because he came home late. He became very upset and yelled at me and said I was being unfair. We had an agreement, I was respectful when he broke his agreement, and he didn't have time to finish his dessert, so it seemed like a logical discipline.

This mother didn't do anything wrong, but she did neglect to state the logical connection between being late and not getting dessert—their need to leave for church on time. She said her son couldn't have dessert because he came home late. Her son didn't see how dessert and being late were logically related. She would have been clearer to say, "We need to leave at six, so you don't have *time* to eat your dessert." Sometimes we need to explain that "Because A (misbehavior) happened, B happened. Therefore, C (discipline) is the outcome (or solution)." We can also ask this as a question, "What happened when A (misbehavior)?" (The answer is B.) "So what do you think will happen now?" (The answer is C, a logical outcome.)

**Choose the most logically related discipline tool for the situation.** Many parents use one discipline tool for everything—restrictions, grounding, or time-outs. Each of these disciplines, however, are only logically related to certain types of misbehavior. If any of these options become a regular way of disciplining, without any logical connection to the misbehavior, it decreases the effectiveness of the tool. It also brings on one or more of the Four R's of Punishment. Since people can misuse discipline tools, to punish, we will learn when and how to apply each tool, according to the Four R's of Discipline.

## DISCIPLINE IS REASONABLE

**"Reasonable" usually relates to time—how long a discipline lasts.**

- If the time is too short, children might not learn the lesson the discipline can teach.
- If the time is too long, children resent that they've learned the lesson but are still being punished. It seems unfair, which causes resentment and rebellion. This shifts the focus from the lesson to our power to make them suffer longer.

**Consider the cost and benefit of the discipline.** For example, a messy room is less important than the value of participating in a community project. If children plan ahead, they have time to do both. If children don't clean their room and the parent doesn't let the child participate in the community project, the child is missing out on a lesson far more important than cleanliness. Reduced playtime would be more related and reasonable.

**Discipline must be enforceable,** so we aren't forced to back down. What if we say, "Leave the room" to older children and they refuse to go? It's hard to *make* them leave without physical force, which escalates the situation and borders on punishment or abuse. We *can* say, "I will leave" and still enforce it.

**When setting time limits for discipline, consider hours or even minutes, rather than days or weeks.** Use times in your regular routine as possible time markers. For example, "I can see you need to come inside until we finish lunch." Or "You'll have another chance to try after school." With young



children, start with the shortest time possible (minutes) and make it tangible. (“It will be time to leave when Sesame Street is over.”) Remember the child’s sense of time and make it age-appropriate. (We discuss time limits further in the “Restrictions” section.)

**Focus on the lesson and the “next chance to try,” not on the discipline itself.** We want to give children a chance to practice what they learn from discipline while the lesson is still fresh. After we decide a reasonable time, focus any further comments on when their “next chance to try” will occur. Express your confidence in their ability to choose more wisely next time. Describe in positive, specific terms the behavior you want to see, **“You can have another chance (when) to show you can (describe positive behavior).”** For example, “You can have another chance after dinner to show you can keep your bike on the sidewalk.” (Notice, I did not say “. . . not ride in the street.” Remember, “Don’t say Don’t.”)

**Every time the same behavior occurs, increase the length of time by small increments.** (This is called a “progressive” restriction, which we will discuss further in the “Restrictions” section.) If a time is unreasonable, any increase makes it even more unreasonable. If it is short and reasonable, with a chance to improve, any repeated misbehavior can be connected to the lesson. “When someone (behavior), it shows they haven’t learned how to (describe positive behavior) yet. During the next (time) you can plan a way to show you have learned this behavior.”

**“Reasonable” can also refer to the extent of the discipline. Avoid tacking on extra suffering.** It shifts the focus from the lesson to the parent’s control and desire for revenge. For example, a child was supposed to do the dishes, but some dishes weren’t cleaned properly. An unreasonable discipline is to clean *all* the dishes again. The child will ask, “Why should I have to wash a clean dish?” The honest answer to this question is because the parent wants to make the child suffer. There are few, if any, circumstances when “If you don’t do the job right, you have to do the entire job again.” If my hair stylist misses a lock of hair, I won’t ask her to cut all my hair again! If I miss a few leaves when I’m raking, I’m not going to throw the pile of leaves back on the lawn and start over! If the focus of the discipline is on learning, it must be reasonable. Only those dishes that are still dirty need to be washed again. I can ask my stylist to even up the haircut. I can simply rake the remaining leaves. This teaches a much healthier lesson about mistakes: “Mistakes can happen, but we want to fix them or prevent them if possible.”

*A Parenting Class Discussion. A man in my class said, “When I was a child and misbehaved, my parents would threaten to throw away my favorite toy. Several times they followed through with this threat.” Clearly, this was not logically related or reasonable, so I asked him, “What did you learn?” He said, “I learned never to get attached to anything, because it could be ripped away, and never to show my love for a favorite toy or friend or **that** would be the first thing I’d lose.” The class was stunned. Several people, including me, had tears in our eyes as we sighed, “How sad!” I’m sure his parents had no idea their punishment affected their child so profoundly. It taught him nothing about proper behavior and much about conditional love, rejection, and the risks of attachment.*

**Reasonable discipline is enough (time or extent) to teach the lesson, without being so much (long or extreme) that it shifts the focus to who is in power or adds extra suffering.**

If we set an unreasonable discipline and children *show* they are ready to change their behavior, follow these suggestions for **canceling discipline**:

1. Admit that you overreacted out of anger or frustration, if you did.
2. Describe the behavior you’ve seen that leads you to see they are ready to try again.
3. Get an agreement for future behavior.

This process models how to handle mistakes, apologize, and make amends. If we cancel discipline without saying anything, children might think they are “getting away with” something or that we don’t mean what we say. They won’t know *why* we are letting them off the hook. Also, notice the emphasis on children *showing*, through their behavior, that they have learned their lesson. Another option is to ask children to explain what they learned. These methods prevent children from pleading or making false promises, just to manipulate the parent into giving in.

## DISCIPLINE IS RESPECTFUL TO CHILDREN AND PARENTS

**Discipline is both firm and kind.** To be firm *and* kind at the same time, our tone of voice is matter-of-fact and friendly, while our words and follow-through show our firmness. Do not interpret kindness as permissiveness, or confuse firmness with strictness or harshness. Strictness deals with controlling the child. “Get to bed now, or else!” Firmness refers to *our* attitude, behavior, and feelings. “Thirty minutes until lights-out! If you get ready quickly, we’ll have more time to read books.” When we present discipline disrespectfully or in anger, children stew about the way we treated them, instead of learning from the choices they made or making amends for their mistakes.

**Discipline does not label or condemn.** Punishment implies that children *are* bad when they misbehave. Discipline implies that children are lovable and loved, even when their behavior *choices* are poor. Our nonjudgmental attitude says, “While I don’t agree with the behavior choice you made, I still love you. I have faith that you are capable of choosing better behavior (or finding a way to solve this problem).”

**Discipline is the *child’s* choice.** This does not mean we ask children if they *want* discipline. Nor do we imply “It’s *your* fault” in a disrespectful tone. If we’ve taught that behavior choices have results, we can remain calm and matter-of-fact when children make poor behavior choices. We send the message, often nonverbally, that “I see you are facing the results of your choices. I respect you enough not to interfere with those outcomes and will hold you accountable by following through.”

**To teach *self-responsibility*, use helpful questions and word discipline as a choice:**

“If you *choose* to (negative behavior), what will happen? (Wait.) So if you choose to (negative behavior), I’ll know you’ve decided to (discipline). (Which means the child will be responsible for resolving or experiencing the negative outcome.)”

When following through, children might say, “No, I didn’t *choose* that!” Our response can be, “I’m not making you (discipline). When you chose to (negative behavior), you knew what would happen. I’m simply following through with your choice.” It’s important that our tone of voice is kind and matter-of-fact, not punishing, when we say this.

**Respectful discipline is not humiliating or embarrassing.** When we need to discipline children in a group or in public, speak to them in private, so they don’t lose face. If we embarrass or humiliate children, they feel hurt, which often leads to revenge. If we speak to children in private, we are more likely to get their full attention. Children realize we could have embarrassed them, so they reward *our* efforts by quickly cooperating!

## DISCIPLINE’S LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

**Discipline eliminates problem behavior.** When parents consistently follow the PASRR formula to discipline, children learn from it and break the misbehavior cycle faster. Soon, all it takes is a quick reminder. Eventually, the problem behavior is eliminated. This keeps discipline where it belongs—in the attic, where we can find it when it is really needed and after using other tools.

**Appropriate discipline teaches children self-control, self-discipline, and self-responsibility.** Children develop respect for themselves, others, authority, and rules. They are not obedient only when a superior is present, but see the value in rules and learn to respect *all* people. Discipline shows children the results of their behavior and how to make amends, accepting responsibility for the decisions they make.

**Discipline maintains self-esteem.** Although they may regret their behavior choice, children still feel worthwhile if they learn a valuable lesson or have a chance to make amends.

**The benefits last a lifetime.** The self-discipline and other lessons children learn through discipline are valuable to them as adults in nearly every setting: work, personal relationships, and parenting. Effective discipline builds trust and children respect and admire their parents.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE

PUNISHMENT	DISCIPLINE
Over-controlling and harsh.	Balanced—kind <i>and</i> firm.
Belief: “The more you suffer, the more you learn.” The focus is on suffering, which distracts the child from learning.	Belief: “The more you learn, the less you suffer.” The focus is on learning from mistakes.
Misbehavior is a crime and children <i>are</i> bad.	Misbehavior is a poor behavior choice, which even good children can make.
Parent is responsible for controlling children.	Parent is responsible for teaching children <i>self-control</i> and holding children accountable for their actions.
Uses condescending lectures and blame.	Is respectful and focuses on solutions.
Uses warnings and threats, “If you do _____, I’ll _____.”	Uses choices, “If you choose ( <u>behavior</u> ), I’ll know you have chosen ( <u>discipline</u> ).”
Respects <i>only</i> the parents’ rights.	Respects parents’ <i>and</i> child’s rights.
Is arbitrary, based on parents’ whims and anger.	Is logically related to misbehavior.
Is usually unreasonable. Parent adds on extra suffering or time.	Is reasonable, suffering is self-imposed and time ends when the child is ready to try again.
Is reactive and revengeful.	Is proactive (revealed).
Reminds child of past mistakes, “I told you so.”	Allows a quick return to the normal routine.
Decreases self-esteem.	Maintains self-esteem.
Children develop defensive “I don’t care” attitude. The severity of punishments must increase.	Children care about behaving well and correcting their mistakes. The need to discipline decreases.
Builds resentment and rebellion.	Builds respect, responsibility, self-control, and self-discipline.

**Discipline in blended families.** Give new step-relationships time to develop and emphasize communication and teamwork. Children are usually skeptical of a new stepparent. They feel a new surge of loyalty to the natural parent who is left out of this family. It is foolish for new stepparents to try to take over the role of the left-out parent. It only causes more resentment.

When blending two families with children, family councils are vital. (Chapter 14, “Family Council Toolset,” addresses special circumstances of single and blended families). Many experts encourage the new stepparent to take a back seat in discipline issues. This is only necessary if the natural parent or stepparent uses over-controlling power punishments. If the natural parent and stepparent use balanced discipline, including open communication and problem solving, they can participate in discussions more equally.

## DISCIPLINE TOOLS

We must use each discipline tool according to the “Four R’s” or we will turn it into punishment.



### Show Children How to Make Amends ☆☆☆☆

**Whenever possible, use this tool, because it is always logically related.** We only need to present it respectfully and have reasonable expectations. For example, if a child writes on a wall, ask a helpful question, “How can you get these marks off the wall?” Our question makes it clear it is the child’s responsibility to clean the wall and the child’s answer will reveal how to do it. If children don’t know how, we can give information. This is how children learn self-discipline and resourcefulness. The child does not have to do it all at once or use a toothbrush, since this would be unreasonable and punishing. When children know how to correct mistakes, they often do it on their own in the future—becoming *self*-disciplined.

#### Ways to Make Amends

- Whoever drops it..... needs to pick it up.
- Whoever spills it ..... needs to wipe it up.
- Whoever breaks it..... needs to fix or replace it.
- Whoever loses it..... needs to find or replace it.
- Whoever left it open ..... needs to close it.
- Whoever left it on ..... needs to turn it off.
- Whoever hurt it ..... needs to apologize and help heal it.

**Do not tell children what to do; suggest it as an option.** Explain how children can make amends in a calm, friendly, matter-of-fact tone of voice. You can even give them choices about ways to make amends. For example, if children break something, they can either fix it or do extra chores to earn the money to replace it. If children are too young or inexperienced to do the activity, they can help *you*. For example, if a toddler spills a drink, the parent can hand the child a towel and put a hand on top of the child’s, to show how to wipe the spill.

**When another person (rather than a “thing”) is hurt, there are several ways to make amends.** Look at the wound, get ice, write a letter of apology, give a hug or kiss, or say “I’m sorry.” Avoid getting into a power struggle *making them* do any of these things. (See the “Sibling Conflicts” section in the Child Problem Toolbox for details on handling an insincere “sorry.”)

**A Graduate's Story.** *My husband and I were both working late one evening and hired Allison to babysit our two children. Isaac, 9, was playing outside when his tennis ball landed on the roof. He asked Allison if he could get the ball and she said "No." Isaac decided to get it anyway. Soon, Isaac's friend, Aaron, showed up and climbed on the roof with Isaac. When Allison saw them both on the roof, she asked them to get down. The boys said they were "stuck" and refused to come down. (It's debatable if this was sincere or a game.) Allison asked nicely, then firmly, and finally demanded they come down. The next-door neighbor came out. She knew the sitter and the boys. She, too, insisted the boys come down. The boys got off the roof only after Allison and the neighbor walked away.*

*The next morning, my husband told Isaac, "We are aware of what happened with Allison last night. You need to be thinking about what you did. When you come home from school today, be prepared to talk to your mother about appropriate discipline."*

*When Isaac came home, I went to his room. "We need to discuss what happened last night when Allison was here." Isaac made excuses for why he was on the roof, insisting he was stuck. I listened to his feelings and reasons, but didn't accept any as an excuse. I said, "Isaac, I know you think you are old enough to be allowed on the roof, but when a sitter is here, we expect you to do what she says. Allison told you not to get on the roof and you chose to defy her. Now we need to talk about what happens next."*

*"There are three issues here," I said. "First, you got on the roof when you weren't supposed to and wouldn't come down. Second, you involved Aaron in this . . ." Isaac interrupted, "But Aaron decided, on his own, to get on the roof!" I calmly asked, "And whose roof was it?" "I paused while he thought. Then I continued, "When Aaron is at our house, I expect you **both** to follow our rules." He nodded in agreement. "Third," I continued, "this behavior is unacceptable anytime, but this incident occurred when a sitter was here. Now, we need to decide what the appropriate discipline is for each part of this problem."*

*Isaac suggested restricting himself to the house for three weeks. Normally, I would have thought this was unreasonable, but this was a serious offense. I suggested we break down the time. Since Isaac abused the privilege of playing outside, he would be restricted to the house the first week. The second week, he could play outside by himself. The third week, Aaron could play at our house, if they were supervised. If all went well, the fourth week would be back to normal. (This is called a "regressive restriction," which is explained in the Restrictions section.) This plan also took care of problem number two, the fact that Aaron was involved. Isaac agreed to give up his privilege of being on the roof, even to help his father clean gutters, until late autumn, which was not far off.*

*Finally, I asked Isaac how he could make amends with Allison. He suggested writing an apology. I agreed and added a firm suggestion, "I paid Allison to supervise you and your sister. What she had to handle was above and beyond the call of duty for a sitter. Since she worked twice as hard, I would like you to pay her extra for the time you spent on the roof. It amounts to \$2.00." Isaac agreed.*

*I also talked to Aaron's mom and we coordinated our discipline. Aaron was restricted to his house for a week and voluntarily wrote letters apologizing to both Allison and me for his part in the incident. Isaac did not complain once while on house restriction. He confirmed our arrangements several times and knew when it was time for the next level of restrictions. It was hard for him to write and deliver his apology to Allison, but he did it anyway.*

This mother could have easily turned this discipline into punishment. She could have demanded the apologies and payment. She could have blamed and shamed Isaac. Although she was not pleased with what happened, she was pleased with the discipline they arranged.

**Children need to learn that *making* mistakes isn't as important as what they can do to prevent or correct them.** When we teach children that mistakes are bad, they will spend their energy denying responsibility or covering up. Hiding mistakes prevents someone from fixing them or learning from

them. Children can take responsibility for what they have done, whether or not it was a mistake. For example, if children steal something they must give it back in person and apologize. If it was a teen who was old enough to shop alone, the teen could have supervised shopping visits before regaining this privilege.



## Offer Choices ☆☆☆☆

Throughout our tour of *The Parent's Toolshop*, we have learned to use choices within limits: to prevent problems, gain cooperation, prevent and redirect power struggles—and now, to reveal and follow through with discipline.

**It is important to only offer choices we are willing to allow.** If we say, “Eat your peas or leave the table” and the child leaves the table, we can’t say, “Get back here and eat those peas!”

**Offer a choice between positive behavior and the result of negative behavior.** Remember that both choices must be respectful to the child. Unfair choices, like “Do it or get a spanking” are power threats. There are several formulas appropriate for discipline:

1. “(Describe the positive choice and the value behind it). If you choose to (negative behavior), I’ll know you’ve decided to (discipline).”
  - ▶ “To roller blade safely, people need to wear a helmet and pads. If you decide to skate without protection, I’ll know you’ve decided to not play street hockey today.”
2. “You can (positive behavior) or (result of negative behavior). You decide.”
  - ▶ “You can settle down or leave the room. You decide.”
  - ▶ “You can either throw the ball away from the street or go in the back yard. You decide.”

**Adjust the choices as issues shift.** This is tricky, but it can prevent power struggles at each level of your response. Consider the bike example and notice how the focus of the choices changes to avoid power struggles at each step:

1. Reveal the discipline as a choice, “You can either ride your bike on the sidewalk or put it away.”
2. When the child goes near the street again, we say, “I can see you’ve decided to put your bike away.” (Do *not* say, “I can see you want *me* to put your bike away.” Give the child a chance to be responsible for following through with the discipline.)
3. If the child does not put the bike away, the issue has shifted. Now the issue is *how* the bike is going to be put away. We reveal a *new* choice, “Either you can put your bike away or I can. You decide.”
4. If the child refuses or doesn’t respond, we can say, “*I can see you want me* to put your bike away.” If the child fusses, we can say, as we follow through, “You had the choice to put the bike away yourself. You can have another chance to ride it (time).”

The only exception to this scenario is if the child refuses to come out of the street to have this discussion. A friendly, nonthreatening approach is more likely to result in the child coming out of the street. (“Hey Jon! Come here a second,” instead of “Jonathan Michael Jones! Get over here this instant!”) We may need to run in the street, get a hold of the handlebar, and say all of the above firmly but respectfully as we guide the bike back up to the sidewalk. This approach is called . . .



## Take Action

**Any action *must* fit the “Four R’s.”** The action must be related to the behavior. It must be reasonable and done in a respectful way. Usually, we want to reveal our plan so children are expecting it, but there are times when the very act of revealing the plan turns the statement into a threat.

***A Graduate's Story.** I drive my two teenagers to school every morning. They worked out a plan for who sits in the front seat. Whoever sits in the front gets to pick the radio station. If they argue about seating arrangements or break their agreement, they both automatically sit in the back seat. **Then** they argue about which radio station to play. I've tried saying, "If you two are going to argue, I'll turn off the radio," but they either can't hear me or take it as a power play. This week, I simply took action. When they started arguing I turned off the radio without revealing my plan. They immediately stopped arguing and asked, "Why did you do that?" Now, I had their full attention. I said, "I can't listen to the radio **and** arguing. If you two can't agree, we won't listen to **any** music." So far, it's worked! They are back to their seating agreements and haven't argued about the radio all week.*

**Taking action involves deciding what you will do, not what you will make the child do.** If you have already revealed a discipline and children test you, simply follow through with what you said you'd do, with as few words as possible. It is perfectly okay to take children by the hand and start walking, turn off a TV, or lock a toolbox if you have revealed your intention to do so.

**When you take action you may or may not say anything.** We've learned a lot about what to say in various parenting situations. Often, we need to take some action *while* we are speaking. *If* we speak, we want to use all the communication skills we have learned. Sometimes no words are necessary; our actions speak for themselves.

***A Personal Story.** My husband and I sleep in on Saturdays, when we can, and our kids occupy themselves while we sleep. Before they were teens, they would often get too loud or start arguing and screaming and wake me up. I felt aggravated and resentful when I went downstairs. If it hadn't happened for a while, I would remind them of the discipline for screaming while others are sleeping. "You can watch TV quietly or you can play quietly in your own rooms—you decide."*

*If they woke me up again, I did one of two things. If I was still calm enough, I'd say, "I can see you two have decided to go to your rooms for a while," as I turned off the TV. If I was fuming, I stumbled down the stairs, walked into the family room, turned off the TV, and left. I didn't say anything. They knew what they did and why I took action. If it happened the next weekend, I would simply take action at the first incident, because the rule and discipline were still fresh in their memories. I only had to do this a half dozen times before the problem stopped for good. Today, many years later, my teens sleep in later than I do!*



## Allow Natural Consequences ☆☆☆☆

**Natural consequences happen if the parent does nothing. They are predictable and always logically related.** To follow through with a natural consequence, parents must hold themselves back from rescuing children. We can reveal a natural consequence or our unwillingness to rescue children. If children insist on behaving that way, they are choosing to experience the natural consequence of that behavior. Do *not* say, "I told you so"; Instead, ask, "What can you do now?" or "How can you prevent this the next time?"

***A Personal Story.** When Chris was three, he wore a superhero sweatsuit with matching winter boots the entire summer! I told him he would get too hot (the natural consequence), but he didn't! My friends still remember this and tease Chris and me (in a friendly way) about how cute he was.*

**Only use natural consequences if they meet the following criteria:**

- **They are safe.** Allowing a child to go in the street would be too dangerous.
- **They are not too far in the future.** Not brushing teeth results in cavities after several months. This is too long to wait.
- **There are consequences.** Nothing naturally and predictably happens when someone talks out of turn, although it is inappropriate behavior.

Parents often worry that their children's mistakes could ruin their lives forever. Few mistakes are this serious. Fear encourages parents to control their children's lives, rather than letting go, so the children can learn how to live their own lives. With **teens**, these behavior choices and natural consequences usually occur away from parents. This is an even greater reason to allow teens (and children of all ages) to experience the consequences of mistakes that aren't dangerous, so they will learn sooner rather than later.

In the following examples, the parent probably has a chance to reveal the natural consequence. If the child still chooses that behavior, the parent could use another discipline tool or let the natural consequence occur.

- ▶ Dropping an object on the floor from a high chair and letting it stay there.
- ▶ Forgetting a school lunch and being hungry.
- ▶ Forgetting homework and experiencing the school's consequence.
- ▶ Coming home late and missing dinner.
- ▶ Not washing a breakfast bowl until later and having a harder time cleaning it.
- ▶ Not practicing enough and doing poorly at a recital.

The first time children forget books, homework or lunches, or if they forget only a few times a year, it is less risky to deliver the item. Use problem solving to have children select self-reminders they can use. If they are regularly forgetful, don't rescue them. Let them experience the natural outcome. If the child experiences the result and comes up with a plan for remembering, the problem will usually resolve itself.

***A Personal Story.** I have a policy that I am only willing to deliver forgotten lunches, homework or books **three** times each school year. I have the same "three strikes" rule about driving the kids to school if they miss their bus. The first time it happens, I willingly deliver the item or drive the child to school. I remind them that I am only willing to do this two more times the entire school year. We do problem solving so the child has a plan to prevent the problem from happening again. If I have to deliver an item or drive a third time, I reveal my intent to not rescue them again. We do problem solving again. This time, we discuss the school's consequences and what the child can do to solve the problem on their own if it happens again. So far, my kids have reached the "third strike" only once. Most years, they only get one strike.*



## Apply Restrictions

**Use restrictions sparingly; they are one of the most misused and overused tools of discipline.** Restrictions are power plays, because parents have the power to restrict something. Restrictions are best arrived at through problem solving, with the child's involvement and understanding.

**Restrictions are only logically related to an abuse of a privilege or right.** Most rights and privileges have a responsibility connected. The obvious effect of not accepting the responsibility is to lose the privilege.

- ▶ Having toys requires the responsibility of taking care of them. When children don't take care of them, they lose the opportunity to play with the toys they don't take care of. Throwing away the toys, however, would be unreasonable punishment.
- ▶ Teens earn a driver's license by passing a test and signing an agreement to abide by the laws. If young drivers break an important law or an accident occurs at their fault, they are showing they might not be ready to have a license. Get a conditional driving agreement between parent and teen before the teen actually has the license.
- ▶ If children come home late, there are two options. If it is a chronic problem, they cannot go out the next day or can have friends visit at their house. If it's not a chronic problem, however late the child is, that is how much earlier he or she needs to be home the next time.



**Don't restrict responsibilities or children's commitments.** Restricting children from an extracurricular activity when the offense has nothing to do with the activity is illogical and unreasonable. If it is a team sport, the entire team suffers and the child is forced to neglect a responsibility. The only time it might be reasonable to restrict an extracurricular activity would be for poor grades or in-game fighting. Grade requirements should be established before the child makes the commitment and are usually a school policy. If children want to take on additional activities, get an agreement that they will maintain their other responsibilities or give up the activity. When children are involved in more than two extracurricular activities, it is probably too much. Allow children to try out different activities, one at a time. If they want to start something new, they must decide which activity they are going to temporarily give up.

If misbehavior occurs during a sport or extracurricular activity, deal with the act, not the place the act occurred. For example, if children fight during a game, the coach is the appropriate person to restrict children from playing. Parents can suggest children make amends with the other player; an apology, written or verbal, for example. If that is not possible, parents can brainstorm what children can do the next time they are tempted to fight. Involve the coach to reveal that, if it happens again, they will sit on the sidelines for one game (to start).

**Avoid restrictions from special events, such as school dances or scout/church outings.** You especially want to make an exception if the outing would be a positive learning experience or was planned far in advance. A more logical and reasonable discipline can be in effect before and after the activity. Special activities should only be restricted if a severe infraction occurs that is logically related to that specific event. When there is no logical connection between the event and the restriction, it's unreasonable and clearly a parent's effort to make the child suffer.

**Negotiate restrictions in direct relation to the severity of what occurred.** You want children to have an opportunity to *show* they can behave responsibly. While they are restricted, they can't put the lesson to use.

- **Progressive restrictions** start with the least restriction and increase if the behavior continues. It is best to use progressive restrictions when children are in the process of learning a skill, so they can have another chance soon to practice the lessons and skills. The example of riding a bike in the street illustrated a progressive restriction.
- **Regressive restrictions** start with the most restrictive limits. If all goes well, the next period is less restrictive, and so on, until all privileges are restored. It is most appropriate to use regressive restrictions when the offense involves a severe misuse of a privilege and the child knew *very* well that he or she was breaking an important rule. As the restriction decreases, children can show they can responsibly handle each new level of privilege restoration, which helps parents rebuild their trust. The story about the boys on the roof illustrated a regressive restriction.

When a restriction is over, ask "How can you *show* that you are ready for this responsibility/privilege?" Review agreements or conditions related to the privilege.



## Use Problem Solving ☆☆☆☆

We learned in the Clear Communication Toolset how to do parent/child problem solving. We learned that the last step might be to reveal a discipline, if the behavior happens again. Here, discipline is proposed for the future. Sometimes, however, you will want to use problem solving to plan discipline at the time of a severe violation. When used to plan a discipline, you follow the same steps, except the problem to solve is "What discipline is appropriate?" (The story of the boys on the roof illustrated this process.)

**Involve children in deciding disciplines.** If the child can describe what they did wrong, why it was wrong, and what they plan to do differently, they have probably learned the lesson. There may not need to be any discipline at all. If discipline is needed, we can ask children what they think it should be. Children are often better at suggesting discipline that meets the "Four R's" than parents! When children suggest something that doesn't fit all four R's, simply adjust it until it does.

**A Personal Story.** *When I was 16, I passed my driving test with flying colors. I enjoyed cruising past friends' houses, honking a "Hello." One day, I looked at a friend's house for a brief second, as I honked my horn. When I looked back to the road, it was too late, I hit my friend's father's parked car. Fortunately, it was an old tank and didn't have a scratch. My bumper was so crumpled I couldn't drive it further.*

*I had to go to my friend's house, tell them I hit their car, and ask to call my parents. Having to make this call was a natural consequence I couldn't avoid. Fortunately, the friend's family was nice about the accident. My mom was calm and I was impressed that she first asked "Are you okay?" before asking about the car. "We'll discuss this when you get home," she said.*

*My dad drove me home. He didn't say a word. Now I knew I was in **big** trouble. I had already thought about what I did and what should be done about it. When I arrived home, my mother first asked me what happened and then listened. I told her and then handed her my driver's license and bank book. I restricted myself to the house for three weeks and gave up my phone privileges.*

*She accepted the license, saying, "You can get your license back when you pay for the damages." She looked in the bank book and said, "This is not enough to cover the damage to the car. You'll need to do some extra work to make up the difference." She accepted my restriction to the house, but said it would only last until I had paid for the damages to the car. She then said, "Your phone has nothing to do with driving. Besides, if you are stuck in the house that long, you'll never survive without your phone."*

*I learned a lot from this experience. This was the worst thing I had ever done, yet my mom treated me with respect throughout our problem solving. I was so impressed that she changed the illogical part of my self-discipline, even though she was disappointed and angry. My parents didn't have to enforce this discipline; I did it myself. Since I came up with the discipline, I couldn't shift the responsibility for what I did to someone else. By the time I had worked through my self-imposed guilt, I had earned the money, repaired the car, and I was ready to drive more safely. I didn't have another accident for 20 years, and that one was the other guy's fault!*

**Ask questions, instead of lecturing.** When parents are faced with disciplining their children, they often *tell* children what happened, how children should feel about what happened, and what they should do next time. They think they are "teaching" them a lesson, but they are really taking on full responsibility for pulling the "lesson" together. The F-A-X process we learned in the Child Problem Toolbox helps children figure out the "lesson." Parents ask questions that draw the information out and help children piece together the puzzle for themselves. This approach helps children learn from their own answers. It prevents parental lectures that children tune out and keeps the ball in the child's court, where it belongs. Acceptable questions avoid the word "why," which puts children on the defensive. Instead, ask "what" and "how" questions, such as the following:

- What can you do to show you have learned \_\_\_\_ and are ready to be responsible for \_\_\_\_?
- What happened?
- What caused this?
- What were you trying to accomplish?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What did you learn?
- What could you do differently next time?
- What should your discipline be?
- What would that teach you about \_\_\_\_?

Use a matter-of-fact, friendly tone-of-voice and pause between each question, or children feel they're being grilled.

**Start with verbal agreements.** Written contracts can be disrespectful and send the message that parents don't trust children to keep their agreements. If children forget, simply remind them once of

**Did you know . . .**

*The original meaning of the word "educate" is "to draw forth" information? Yet, so often we try to teach by cramming information into people.*

the agreement and follow through with your end of it. Use nonverbal reminders after that. (See problem solving in Chapter 10 for ideas.) Let written agreements serve as reminders, not evidence of guilt.

The following story is a good example of how disciplinary problem solving actually sounds. The story involves the two boys who climbed on the roof—it seems that summer they were into testing limits. The mother said her son had never been in trouble before he climbed on the roof. With great credit to her handling of this situation, she says he has not severely tested limits or gotten into any trouble since then (1993).

***A Graduate's Story.** My son, Isaac, and his friend, Aaron, asked if they could ride their bikes to a convenience store. Aaron's mother and I both said the store was too far. It was also too dangerous to ride through the woods (and against park rules) and cross a four-lane intersection to get there. So the boys got permission to ride their bikes as far as the park and then sneaked off to the store. When they arrived, Aaron began shaking pop cans. Isaac was not causing any trouble and he repeatedly told Aaron to stop. When Aaron refused to behave, Isaac started to leave—but it was too late. The cashier had already called the police. Both boys had to sit in the back of a police car while he called their parents.*

*As I drove the boys home, I could tell they had been crying. Isaac looked really angry, too. I asked them both, "So, what did you learn?" Isaac didn't answer. Aaron said, "Not to go to the store without permission." I asked him, "What else?" He added, "To treat the stuff in the store with respect." I only added, "Well you'll need to work this out with your parents. I assume you know we won't be seeing you for a while." He nodded. I gave Aaron a hug and wished him luck in telling his parents.*

*I asked Isaac to wait in his room while I pulled my emotions and thoughts together. "Sitting in a police car was already a consequence that imposed suffering," I thought. Since Isaac wasn't the one who was causing the trouble in the store, I didn't think I had to be extra hard on him. Nevertheless, discipline was still in order, since Isaac knew he wasn't supposed to ride his bike through the park or to the store. I went to Isaac's room and sat on his bed. "What happened?" I asked. Isaac didn't say anything. I was determined to listen and not lecture, so I sat quietly and waited—and waited—until Isaac finally told me the story. "What did you learn?" I asked. "Nothing," was Isaac's reply. "That's not the answer I'm looking for!" I said with raised eyebrows and a smile. "Not to go anywhere with Aaron," Isaac added. I summarized, "I guess you learned how you can get in trouble when the person you are with acts irresponsibly. It's important to choose your friends wisely, huh?" Isaac nodded in agreement. I continued, "You know, you showed good judgment in telling Aaron you were going to leave if he didn't stop," I said. "I guess next time you'll do that sooner, huh?" Isaac nodded.*

*I needed to move into discipline. I knew I'd have to be careful not to lecture so I could keep Isaac involved, although he wasn't very talkative. I began, "You knew it was against the rules to go to the store, right?" Isaac nodded, "Yes." "Well, there are a couple issues here," I continued. "You rode your bikes beyond the park, where you told us you would be, to the store where you were not allowed to go. The cashier has said you and Aaron aren't allowed back in the store, so that takes care of that issue. What do you think the discipline should be for abusing your bike privileges?" Isaac suggested a bike restriction for three weeks. I suggested a regressive restriction, "How about no bike at all for one week. If all goes well, the next week, you can ride your bike on our street only. If you are responsible, the next week you can ride around our block, and the next you can ride one block over." Isaac agreed.*

*"How long do you think you should be restricted from going to the park?" I asked. Isaac suggested, "Until Spring break," which was in one month. Although this was a long time, I agreed, adding a few conditions. "When Spring break arrives, you can go to the creek, but still can't go into the park without an adult or older teenager, okay?" Isaac nodded. "Anything else?" I asked.*

*Isaac shook his head. Isaac and I gave each other a hug and he chose to stay in his room for a while. When he came out, I didn't say anything more about what happened. Isaac followed through on his discipline without any reminders.*



## Reveal Logical Consequences

**Logical consequences are the riskiest of all the discipline tools, because it is so easy to violate any one of the 4R's of discipline:** The consequence is not logically *related* to the behavior or the logical connection is unclear. It is presented *disrespectfully*, is *unreasonable*, or is not *revealed* ahead of time.

These mistakes usually occur when parents choose or present consequences in anger. Taking time to calm down and plan an effective discipline is far better than rashly reacting and making one of these mistakes. During our think time, children can also be thinking about what they did and an appropriate discipline.

**Identify the goal of the misbehavior before using logical consequences.** Natural consequences are useful with *any* of the four goals of misbehavior. We aren't involved; we are simply letting nature take its course. When we use *logical* consequences, however, it's important to consider the child's misbehavior goal:

- Logical consequences are *only effective at the time of conflict* if the goal is *attention*. Parents must be careful, though, that their comments or actions don't give attention-seeking children an unintentional payoff. Stay detached and friendly.
- When the goal is *power* or *revenge*, logical consequences are most effective during a problem-solving session *after* a cooling-off period and *after* parents have defused the power or revenge cycle. Otherwise, any logical consequence will be interpreted as a power or revenge tactic. Some consequences make the *parent* suffer more than the child! A child stuck in the house for three weeks might drive parents crazy! Having to leave a restaurant or party deprives parents of their meal or adult company. Maybe, as in the latter example, the child *wanted* to leave! Now who is suffering and who "got their way"?
- Do *not* use natural and logical consequences when the goal is *giving up*. It usually causes more discouragement. Consider other options listed in the "Giving Up" section of the PO Toolset.

**Logical consequences are not always appropriate for very young children or teens.**

- Logical consequences are rarely appropriate for **babies**, because they cannot think logically. Of course, when there's a problem with a baby's behavior, there can be some kind of discipline. For example, if an infant grabs the parent's glasses or earrings, the parent can hold the baby's hand or place the infant on the floor (taking action).
- **Young children** often don't understand the logic of the consequence but can still learn cause and effect. "When I do \_\_\_\_, \_\_ happens." Since young children have short memories, the lesson may not last long. This is why we want to use the PU Toolset before or in combination with discipline.
- Logical consequences are usually not effective with **teenagers**. Since teens are in a developmental stage that revolves around power and independence, they see logical consequences as a means of being controlled. A more effective tool is to use problem solving to reveal or decide discipline.

**Follow through as soon as possible, even if it is inconvenient for the child.** I call this an "inconvenience consequence." If children are upstairs playing and have left the TV on, call them downstairs to turn it off. Yes, we *are* sitting right there, but if they turned the TV on, it is their responsibility to turn it off. Don't go out of your way, however, to *make* a consequence inconvenient.

**A Personal Story.** *Fall was ending and winter was arriving. I had kept the front door open for months, but had the heat on now and wanted the front door closed. Chris was not used to closing the door behind him. The first time he forgot, I called him in and explained, “I have the heat on now. You need to remember to close the front door when you leave.” “Okay, Mom,” he replied. The next time I walked through the living room I found the door open again! (I knew it was still PU. Although I had explained, it was still reasonable that he’d forget.) I called to him, saying “Chris, the door is open!” He came running back to close the door. I revealed a consequence, “If you want to play outside, you need to remember to close the door behind you. If I find the door left open again, I’ll know you’ve decided to play inside.” “Okay, Mom,” he replied. Again, I found the door open. I felt bad having to call him in, but I did anyway. All I said was, “Chris! Door!” He yelled to his friends, “I gotta go inside now!” and he came running. He said, “Sorry, Mom,” and went downstairs to find something else to do.*

You may be thinking your children wouldn’t be this cooperative. (Remember that I’m already seeing the long-term benefits of using the Universal Blueprint. I am *not* immune, however, to problems!) At first, children might think we are being unreasonable. Don’t get into power struggles; acknowledge the inconvenience and the value behind the request. Follow through consistently, or children will try to negotiate exceptions to the rules.

**There is never just one possible logical consequence for a problem situation.** Logical consequences often take great thought, creativity, and effort, which is why we want to use them sparingly. Here are a few examples of logical consequences:

- Beth runs up and down the aisles of the grocery store and almost ran into another cart. She can either hold on to the cart or ride in it.
- Donna, 14, forgot to lock the house in the morning when she was the last one out. She needs to develop a reminder plan to prevent it from happening again. If it happens again, she will need to wait for the bus outside. She can try being responsible for locking the house again the next day, with the time increased every time she forgets.



## Use Self-Control Time-outs

Time-outs are one of the most misunderstood and misused discipline tools around.<sup>5</sup> Myths and inaccurate information thrive among parents and professionals. Most parents are familiar with the ineffective time-out process: *make* children go to a chair, room, or isolated spot *every* time they misbehave. The parent sets a *timer* (one minute for every year in age), and the *parent* makes sure the child has no fun while there. Everything about this time-out is decided and controlled by the parent. This type of “power time-out” is punishment and implies, “You are bad and I’m going to make sure you suffer for what you did.” When you think a time-out is needed, ask yourself, “Do I want to give my children a chance to feel better and behave more constructively, or do I simply want to shame them or control their behavior?”

Imagine, for a moment, that *you* are so angry you are ready to lose control. If someone made you sit still in a chair and say nothing one minute for each year of *your* age, could you do it? Who says it should take me 40 minutes to calm down and my son 15 minutes? What if we’re calm sooner and still have to sit there? Would you feel better or more angry? Would you feel resentful and think about revenge? Most parents would agree that “power” time-outs wouldn’t work for them if *they* were angry. So why do we think this will work with children who usually have poorer anger management skills than we do?

Healthy, effective time-outs meet each of the “Four R’s of Discipline.”

**Since the purpose of healthy time-outs is to regain self-control, they are only logically related to behavior that suggests the child has lost control.** (Otherwise, use another, more appropriate discipline tool.) Time-outs are usually only appropriate for very disruptive or aggressive behavior that

could possibly be harmful to the child or others, such as hitting, biting, or throwing. Actually, ***time-out is a Keep Your Cool tool, more than a discipline tool.*** (Parents wouldn't look for it there, so I put it here!) Healthy time-outs are useful for parents *and* children. They provide a way to calm down, before anger (or misbehavior) gets out of control.

**Reveal the plan in advance.** Teach children, during a happy time, about the value of a cooling-off period and the importance of waiting until everyone feels better before trying to solve conflicts. Explain that the purpose of a time-out is to calm down, not to punish or to suffer. It is not a time to sit and think about how bad they are, to do work, to write sentences, or anything else that would be punishing or humiliating. Time-outs are a time to do whatever we need to do to feel better and work through upsetting feelings or bad moods. Our goal is to work through feelings so we can talk calmly about solutions to the problem.

**Present time-outs in a respectful way.** Time-outs are respectful only when children know the purpose is to help them feel better and work toward solving a problem. Shame and humiliation make them feel more discouraged and more motivated to misbehave. ***Present the time-out as a choice.*** A child can choose to do problem solving or calm down first. Ask, "Do you want to talk about this?" Or "What would help you most right now?" If children resist, change the focus of the choices as you follow through, as in the following example.

1. "Would you like to (positive behavior) or would you like to go to (your room or other place) and (anger energy release activity) until you calm down?"
2. If children continue to resist and are still out-of-control, say, "I see you need to ("go to your room," for example). Are you going to go by yourself, or do you need help?"
3. If children don't go on their own, say "I see you need my help." Kindly and firmly guide them to the room (or other location). If they come out, it is often a sign that the child is an external recharger. (See the next section about choosing time-out locations.) If the child is an internal recharger, but is trying to get attention or power, say, "When you've calmed down, you can join me again and work out a solution."
4. If children cry and plead, "I'm calm! I'll be good," say, "I'll know you are calm and ready to come out when I hear you've \_\_\_\_." Give a mental checklist, such as ". . . stopped crying and are breathing and talking calmly." Stay calm yourself and ignore any attention-seeking behavior. Often, you will hear them doing each suggestion *in order!*

If we fail to present each escalating step as a choice, it turns the time-out into a power play. Ultimately, if we consistently follow through with this plan, children begin to put *themselves* into time-out. This is an excellent sign that they are learning self-control and recognize when they are about to lose control.

**Select a location for the time-out.** Involve children (if old enough) in selecting the location of time-outs; almost anyplace is appropriate. Remember the different recharge styles you learned about in the Keep Your Cool Toolset, internal and external. Decide whether the child needs a lack of stimulation and isolation (internal) or company and stimulation (external) to calm down and recharge their energy. Select a location according to the needs of the individual child, according to the following categories:"

- ***Internal recharge*** children will benefit from the privacy of their rooms or any place away from others. They might also benefit from being outside by themselves. If these children don't get enough time alone, their behavior can deteriorate. If they are in a group and can't be alone, teach them to find a quiet corner or sit slightly out of the group. Don't pressure internal recharge children to stay in a group. The interruptions and demands rob them of energy.
- ***External recharge*** children get their energy from people. Being with people helps them calm down. Traditional time-outs, which isolate children, can make their behavior *worse!* They often

grieve as though they were being rejected, crying even harder when alone. If children won't stay in their rooms, follow parents, or their behavior escalates when they are alone, it is a good sign they are external rechargers. Let these children take a time-out on your lap, a chair in the same room, or outside. If your comfort calms them down, they are surely external rechargers. If they don't calm down, they may be seeking attention. Offer a gentle hug, while ignoring bids for attention. (*Gentle touch is the key here. Avoid squeezing or using any other excessive force.*)

Some parents hesitate to use a child's room for fear the child will view the bedroom as a prison. If the time-out is presented respectfully and the goal is to give the child and parent some quiet space, it will seem like a safe place, not a punishment. If you are in public, a restaurant for example, you can use a progressive time-out, where each step removes the child farther from the action.

***A Personal Story.** Whenever we waited for a meal when our children were young, we'd pass the time with quiet activities (Step A: **P**revent the problem). Sometimes, one of the kids would get too wound-up at the table or begin to throw a tantrum. We **A**cknowledged their feelings and **S**et limits, "I know it's hard to wait when you're hungry, but we all need to be quiet so we don't bother others while they're eating." (Steps B and C1). We'd try to **R**edirect their behavior by focusing on the activities they could do (Step C2). If the tantrum began to escalate, we'd **R**eveal discipline (Step C2), "If you're too loud, we'll need to leave the table." If the behavior didn't subside, my husband or I would begin our public time-out plan. (I'll use my daughter and me as an example.)*

*I'd take her by the hand and walk to the bathroom saying, "Let's wash our hands." If she resisted, I'd gently pick her up and carry her quickly. Once in the bathroom, I would talk to her gently and firmly as we washed our hands. If she was having a tantrum, I'd try to soothe her by acknowledging her feelings while setting firm limits. If her tantrum started to echo, I'd offer a new choice, "You can settle down here and go back to the table or we can go outside." She usually settled down. If she didn't, I'd make a hasty retreat out the door.*

*We'd sit outside, somewhere away from the door. I'd put my arm around her gently, but firmly enough to prevent her from flailing her arms or legs or leaving. I'd say, "When you stop crying and calm down, we can go back inside." I'd take a deep breath, loud enough for her to hear, so I could model calming down. (I usually needed it to keep my cool!) I'd try to ignore her behavior, distracting myself by looking at cars, people, trees blowing in the wind—anything to help me stay calm and detached from her tantrum. If she begged to go back inside or was getting more upset, I'd remind her that we **could** go back inside, **when** she calmed down.*

*Once she had stopped crying, I'd help her wipe her tears and compose herself. I'd give her a hug, acknowledge her feelings, and get an agreement for her future behavior. We'd walk back to the table and get her involved in an activity or her food, if it had arrived. We only had to use this plan several times. Our kids quickly learned the consequence for disruptive behavior in public and chose to be involved in the fun activities or conversation we offered. We have even received compliments from strangers about our children's patience and behavior in public.*

**Time-out activities.** We want to structure time-outs so children can learn to calm down and regain self-control. When discussing time-outs with children ask, "When you feel like you've lost control, what can you do to feel better?" Many parents are upset if their children are happy to go to their rooms or play while in time-out. This is buying into the "kids must suffer" belief of punishment.

If children play during time-out, it shows they have regained some self-control; the time-out worked. Don't worry that children will misbehave so they can go in a time-out. We aren't "rewarding" misbehavior by allowing children to play; we are teaching them anger/stress management techniques to help them regain self-control. Eventually, children will put *themselves* in time-out *before* they lose control. Also, children don't have to come out of the time-out if they don't want to—unless they are trying to avoid problem solving.

Use the Keep Your Cool Toolset to offer suggestions for what children can do while in the time-out to channel their verbal and physical anger energy. Combine the anger energy and recharge style ideas to plan the most appropriate time-out for each child's individual needs. Here are a few examples:

Child's Anger/Recharge Style	Appropriate Time-Out Activities
Verbal anger, internal recharge	Scream in a pillow <i>in their room</i> , color, draw, read, write, listen to tapes, sing to self or play quietly.
Verbal anger, external recharge	Talk to a friend, parent, or stuffed animal, <i>sit on a nearby chair</i> or a parent's lap.
Physical anger, internal recharge	Hit a pillow or punching bag. Pound an inflatable hammer <i>in their room</i> . Outside they can take a walk, run around the yard, or swing <i>alone</i> .
Physical anger, external recharge	Swing or play catch <i>outside</i> with a parent or friend.

If you think children will be destructive, plan ahead by removing things you don't want destroyed. Suggest physical anger energy activities to channel the energy in an appropriate way. If children destroy their own toys, they'll experience the result of no longer having the toy. Don't buy any new toys (except holiday gifts) until they show that they can respect the toys they have. If parents can stay calm, they can "coach" children through the anger energy activities.

**A Graduate's Story.** *When my 12-month-old toddler began to scream and hit, I scooped her up and took her to her room. There, I would find something she was allowed to hit. She particularly liked shaking a pair of maracas. I would help her hold the maracas and show her how to shake them or bang them on her bed. I would reflect her feelings and coach her, saying things like, "That's it! You're really angry, aren't you? Bang those maracas!"*

*Soon, when I took her to her room, my daughter grabbed the maracas herself. Then I only needed to help her get to her room. Eventually, all it took was a suggestion to "go to your room and get your angry energy out." At 18 months, my daughter was putting herself in time-out! Better yet, she used words (instead of screams) to express her feelings. What shocked me most, was that I started this process before she could talk, so as my daughter began talking, she immediately used the verbal skills I had taught her. I realized that my daughter was understanding and learning before she could put the skills into practice on her own. When she was able, she used the anger management skills I had taught her.*

**Plan a reasonable length of time. Avoid using timers and allow children to return when they have regained self-control or show they are ready to act appropriately.**

I don't know who thought of the idea of setting a timer for one minute per year of age, but I wish I had a dime for every time someone has repeated that time-out rule. Timers teach children that they don't have to calm down until the timer goes off. Also, if children show they have calmed down and the timer hasn't stopped, it turns the time-out into a power struggle. Timers also make the parent responsible for controlling the child, instead of the child developing self-control.

**A Personal Story.** *Before my friend Vickie moved, we tried to have lunch several times. Every time, she had to leave due to her three-year-old son's behavior. One of Vickie's strengths as a parent was her consistency in following through. She had learned that time-outs were to be "one minute for every year of age." When her son didn't settle down, she'd give him a choice: he could either settle down or go in a time-out. When he didn't calm down, she made him sit on a chair and*



*set her watch for three minutes. Within about 30 seconds, her son calmly sat there and explained what he had learned and described what he would do differently. He seemed sincere. Since Vickie said the time-out would last three minutes, her son had to wait the full three minutes. He started pleading to get out of the time-out. After two minutes, he was crumbling into a tantrum again, this time from not getting out of the time-out.*

*Vickie warned him that if he didn't calm down by the end of the three minutes, another three minutes would be added. When three minutes were up, he still wasn't calm. Vickie gave her son a new choice; if he didn't calm down when this three minutes was over, they'd go home. Again, the same thing happened—he calmed down before the time was up and a power struggle developed over whether he could come out of the time-out. This time, when he was crying at the end of the time-out, Vickie left. That was what she said, so that was what she had to do. We never did finish a meal together. Her son smiled as his mother left the boring lunch setting and I stayed and finished lunch with my kids, who had watched the entire spectacle.*

*I want to emphasize that Vickie is a terrific parent. She, like many other parents and professionals, had heard commonly accepted (but ineffective) information about time-outs and consistency. Her experience shows that even using a power tool in a respectful way will still produce a power struggle.*

**When a time-out is over:**

- ***If the behavior that caused the time-out was serious or is a recurring problem, you can do some brief problem solving when the time-out is over.*** This type of time-out is a step toward discipline; before any further discussion or problem solving occurs, both parties must calm down. This time-out ends when the child is calm enough to do brief problem solving.
- ***If the time-out was simply a matter of calming down, don't discuss the misbehavior further.*** It will only call attention to the behavior you want to stop. This type of time-out is a discipline in itself. Its focus is on learning or practicing anger management and respectful assertive communication skills.

## DISCIPLINE CHECKLIST

Before or during discipline, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Is discipline really necessary?** Could I use the prevention, communication, or behavior management skills before or instead of discipline?
- **Have I skipped steps in the Universal Blueprint that could address the behavior?** (If you skip the PO Toolset, your discipline could turn into a power play or revenge.)
- **How will my child interpret the discipline?** (View your words and actions as children do.)
- **Am I focusing on suffering or learning?** Am I adding extra suffering? What do I want to teach? Will this discipline teach this lesson?
- **Am I making a power play or threat?** (“If you . . . I’ll . . .”) Am I revealing discipline respectfully, as a choice? (“If you choose to . . ., I’ll know you’ve decided to . . .”)
- **Am I using positive words?** (Avoid “if you don’t stop . . .” Instead, say “You need to . . .”)
- **Am I controlling my emotions and tone of voice?** (Volume is as important as the content. Keep your cool and respectfully communicate.)
- **Is my discipline logically related?** Is the logical connection obvious to my child? If not, have I stated it?
- **Is there any natural consequence I can allow to happen that isn’t dangerous or too far in the future?**
- **Is this discipline reasonable?** Am I giving my child information about the positive behavior I want to see and another chance, as soon as possible, to change the behavior?
- **Can I use problem solving to either avoid discipline, reveal it for the next time, or decide what discipline is appropriate in this situation?**
- **Am I shifting gears to listening, allowing my child the chance to express feelings?** (Remain emotionally detached and respectful, not defensive. You can acknowledge children’s feelings about the discipline, without agreeing or changing the discipline.)

## USING THE DECISION-MAKING WORKSHEET

If we really want to eliminate problem behavior, not just simply respond to it, we need to have a plan that uses tools at every step. To help you remember the steps, use the “Decision-Making Worksheet” that follows the summary sheet. Use it to plan a solution to *any* type of problem. If we plan what we want to say and do, it helps us keep our cool and respond consistently and effectively. Refer to the detailed blueprint (house diagram) at the end of the book for individual tools or hints for using the different toolsets. It is the entire book summarized on one page.

In the practice exercises that follow the summary sheet and Decision-Making Worksheet, we will follow the Universal PASRR steps outlined on the worksheet. Feel free to make extra copies of the worksheet, so you don’t have to write in your book.

## SUMMARY SHEET

### DISCIPLINE TOOLSET

- Discipline helps children learn *from* mistakes, not suffer *for* them. Focus on solutions, not blame or shame.
- Children are responsible for controlling their own behavior. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate behavior choices and holding children accountable for their poor behavior choices.
- Discipline is *respectfully revealed*, whenever possible, as a choice. “If you choose to (misbehavior) I’ll know you’ve decided to (discipline).”
- Discipline is logically *related* to the misbehavior. If it’s not obvious, state the logical connection.
- Discipline is *reasonable*. The time and extent should be the least restrictive, giving children a chance to change or try again soon.

### DISCIPLINE TOOLS

- Show children how to make amends. ☆☆☆☆
- Offer choices. ☆☆☆☆  
Alter the focus of the choices as issues shift.
- Take action. ☆☆☆☆  
Decide what *you* will do, not what you will make children do. Respectfully follow through, with or without words, with reasonable, related actions.
- Allow natural consequences. ☆☆☆☆  
They happen if parents do nothing to rescue. Only use if they are quick and safe. Ask, “What did you learn?”
- Apply Restrictions that are logically related to an abuse of a privilege or right. Don’t restrict responsibilities or privileges children already earned.
- Use Problem Solving to prevent, reveal, or decide discipline. ☆☆☆☆  
“I am concerned about (misbehavior). What can we do to make sure this doesn’t happen again?”
- Reveal Logical Consequences that meet the Four R’s. Use them sparingly.
- Use Self-control Time-outs that teach anger and stress management.
  - ▶ Choose the location based on the child’s internal/external recharge style.
  - ▶ Allow children to do calming activities (verbal/physical anger energy).
  - ▶ Time-outs are over when children have calmed down. No timers!
  - ▶ When a time-out is over, it’s over, unless problem solving is needed.

## PARENT'S DECISION-MAKING WORKSHEET

**SITUATION/PROBLEM:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT TYPE OF PROBLEM IS IT?** (NO, C, P, PU, PO, C/P, C/PU, C/PO) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Any SHARP RV issues? No = C, Yes = P. Is misbehavior PU or PO? Has child consistently shown mastery of the skill? No = PU, Yes = PO? Is this a combination problem?)

**IF PO, WHAT IS THE GOAL?** (Attention, Power, Revenge, Giving up?) \_\_\_\_\_

**STEP A: PREVENT THE PROBLEM** from starting or worsening (Prevention Toolbox: Foundation-Building, Self-Esteem, Cooperation, and/or Independence Toolsets)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLAN A RESPONSE, USING THE APPROPRIATE TOOLSETS:**

**STEP B: ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS** (Child Problem Toolbox: Step B1: Focus on feelings, Step B2: Ask helpful questions, Step B3: X-amine possible options)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STEP C1: SET LIMITS** and/or express concerns (Clear Communication Toolset)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STEP C2: REDIRECT BEHAVIOR** (If PU, what skill do you teach? If PO, break the cycle.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STEP C3: REVEAL DISCIPLINE** (Must be Related, Respectful, and Reasonable. Use problem solving to decide?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## PRACTICE EXERCISES

Since discipline is usually the final step in responding to a problem, consider other alternatives first in the following situations. For each situation, apply the Universal Blueprint steps as outlined in the Decision-Making Worksheet:

Identify the type of Parent problem (P, PU, PO, or C/P, C/PU, C/PO). Apply the PASRR formula.

Step A: **P**revent the problem from starting or worsening (Prevention Toolbox: Self-Esteem, Cooperation, and/or Independence Toolsets).

Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings with the F-A-X Listening Toolset.

Step C1: **S**et limits using the Clear Communication Toolset.

Step C2: **R**edirect the behavior with either the PU or PO Toolsets. (If it is PO, identify the goal and break the cycle.)

Step C3: Then **R**eveal an appropriate discipline.

Try to move through all the steps in a total of two or three sentences. (Detailed possible answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. Derek, 2, screams and refuses to cooperate when you try to buckle him into his car seat.
2. Elizabeth, 3, has written her name and drawn on her bedroom wall with a crayon and ballpoint pen.
3. Nicole, 6, and Kristin, 3, have made a game out of bedtime. They take forever getting ready and make up lame excuses to stay up longer. To keep them moving, their mother can spend nearly an hour reminding them.
4. Margie, 5, is a picky eater. She eats very little and is unwilling to try new foods. She expects her mother to fix her something special for every meal and refuses to eat if her mother doesn't comply. When she does eat, it takes her hours!
5. Gene, 8, was playing with a stick, hitting the branches of a neighbor's tree. There are branches all over the ground when the neighbor comes to Gene's father to complain.
6. Patrick, 7, takes so long getting ready in the morning that he frequently misses the school bus.
7. Ethan, 10, got a phone call from a girl, but wouldn't tell his mother who it was or what she wanted. He asked if he could take a walk. When his father came home, he said he saw Ethan walking with a girl on the other side of a dangerous four-lane street. Ethan did not have permission to go beyond his neighborhood boundaries. When Ethan returned and was confronted, he said the girl asked him to help her sell candy (which was true). Although he had never been willing to do door-to-door sales himself, he wanted to help this girl friend.
8. Dustin, 14, went to the state fair with his parents. He wanted to explore on his own and agreed to meet his parents at a certain time. He didn't keep his agreement. After his parents searched for more than an hour, he showed up.
9. Susan, 14, was caught with drugs at school. She is a straight-A student who has never been in trouble. Susan said: A boy walked past her locker, stuffed a bag of marijuana in her purse, and said, "Just keep this until next period and Joey will get it from you" as he walked away. She was shocked and dumbfounded. She didn't know what to do. The school bell rang and she was afraid to be late to class. She was debating what to do throughout that class period. Another student saw the bag in her purse and reported her. The boy admits giving her the bag and someone else admits he was going to buy it. They both confirm that Susan was simply an innocent victim. Nevertheless, the school policy says she must be referred to Juvenile Court. What should Susan's mother do or say?

## Detailed Answers

1. Derek, 2, screams and refuses to cooperate when his parent tries to buckle him into his car seat.

*Type of problem:* PU and PO. Derek doesn't understand the purpose or importance of a car seat (PU). He is also exerting his *power* (PO), because he doesn't like being confined. Safety is more important than comfort.

*Prevent the problem:* The parent can demonstrate, during a "no problem" time, with a doll or egg and a toy vehicle, what happens when there is an accident and someone isn't using a seat belt or car seat. Ask "What happened? What would have happened if the doll/egg had on a seat belt?"

*Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:* Acknowledge Derek's feelings about being strapped in the car seat, "I know you hate being stuck in that car seat, but it will keep you safe if we ever have an accident. You can climb in on your own or I can put you in the car seat. You decide." Brainstorm ways Derek can have power in the situation. He can learn to buckle himself and can select some special toys to play with.

*Reveal discipline:* If Derek resists, say, "I can see you want me to put you in the car seat this time. Next time, you can climb in yourself." Use gentle force to get him in the car seat. Keep a friendly, matter-of-fact tone of voice. Offer toys or songs as a distraction. Briefly acknowledge his wails, but don't give them extra attention. Parents can sing a song to themselves or turn on the radio to help them keep their cool.

2. Elizabeth, 3, has written her name and drawn on her bedroom wall with a crayon and ballpoint pen.

*Type of problem:* PU. It is age-appropriate for children to want to draw anywhere and with anything, even though they've been told "a million times."

*Prevent the problem:* Try to keep all drawing materials out of reach, although this will be difficult. Make sure she knows what she *is* allowed to color with and on. You may need to repeat quite often, "Pens are for paper," and "Keep the crayons on paper." For some kids this is enough to prevent further problems.

*Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:* "I know you really enjoy drawing, but crayons and pens ruin walls. It's going to be very hard to get this off your wall."

*Reveal discipline:* "I can see you aren't ready to keep your pens and crayons on paper. We'll need to put them up until this mess is cleaned—and I'll need your help." Allow her to do as much as she is capable of doing. She might be able to spray the cleanser and use a sponge by herself. Have her work on it a little longer than she wants to. Work together; when she stops, you stop. If you have cleaned all you can and it won't come off (hint: use "white out" on the pen), she will have to live with messy walls until you can paint again. By the time you have the time and money to repaint the room, the child will probably be older. Say, "I bet you are tired of looking at the writing on these walls. If I paint your walls, will you keep them nice and clean?" If the child has had to live with the effects of her actions for a while, she'll most likely remember and follow through.

3. Nicole, 6, and Kristin, 3, make a game out of bedtime.

*Type of problem:* PO and PU. Nicole understands the rules (PO), but Kristin is probably imitating Nicole (PU). Nicole makes excuses to keep the parent involved (*attention*) and/or to delay bedtime (*power*).

*Prevent the problem:* Make bedtime a positive experience. The routine should allow time to unwind and talk. (See "Bedtime Routines" in Chapter 5, "Cooperation Toolset.")

*Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:* Use any one of these responses to acknowledge feelings: "I know you don't want to go to bed." "I know you don't feel tired." or "It's hard to have to go to bed when you don't want to." Now, set limits, "I know you want to have fun at bedtime, but I don't think either of us has much fun when I'm reminding and nagging you to get ready."

**Reveal discipline:** “I am willing to spend a half-hour for bedtime. This includes the time it takes you to get ready. You can spend all this time getting ready or you can get ready quickly and have time to play a special game. You decide.” Mother can be available during that time, but not remind or nag. Everyone can also brainstorm ideas to make the bedtime routine go smoother.

If children make lame excuses, try putting a limit on how many times they can get up. You can put three ribbons on the doorknob or three balls in a bowl. Each time the child comes out, she delivers one item to the parent. When the items are gone, the parent ignores the child as though she is in bed.

With both of the above plans, the parent can reveal one final discipline—however late the child goes to bed, that’s how much earlier she has to go to bed the following night. It is important to reveal this plan in advance. Otherwise, it will turn into a power struggle.

4. Margie, 5, is a picky, slow eater.

**Type of problem:** PO. This mealtime battle is *not* about hunger. If Margie’s mother caters to her, she feels important (*attention*). Eating (or not eating) is also a way children can feel in control (*power*).

**Prevent the problem:** Many mealtime battles are preventable. We’ve already learned many ideas for making mealtimes smoother. (See suggestions in Chapters 5, 6, and 11, the Cooperation, Independence, and PU Toolsets.)

**Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:** If, despite preventive measures, children still complain and resist, parents can remain firm to their bottom-line limits. They could say any of the following: “I know this is not your favorite food, but I expect you to try at least one small bite.” “This is what we are having tonight. I’m unwilling to fix separate meals. You can decide whether you want to eat.” “I’m willing to prepare some things you like to eat, if you’re willing to help me plan menus.” “You don’t have to like what I fix, but I don’t want to hear criticism.”

**Reveal discipline:** Make it clear that there will be no more food until the next meal. Snacks are only allowed for those who eat healthy meals. If she refuses to eat, allow her to experience the natural effect of hunger.

Decide if slow eaters are simply taking their time (which is healthy) or are getting distracted. Allow children a reasonable amount of time (no longer than an hour) *if* they concentrate on eating. Once the reasonable, tangible time limit is up, put away the food. Do *all* these disciplines in a matter-of-fact, friendly way. If parents become abusive and domineering about food, eating disorders can develop.

5. Gene, 8, was playing with a stick, hitting the branches of a neighbor’s tree. There are branches all over the ground when the neighbor comes to Gene’s father to complain.

**Type of problem:** PU. Gene meant to hit the tree, but he was just playing. He probably didn’t realize he would damage the tree. Once more than a few branches were knocked off, he realized he was hurting the tree and stopped. He probably didn’t think about picking up the branches or confessing his wrong. Only if Gene hated the neighbor and was getting revenge would you consider this to be intentional (PO) behavior.

**Prevent the problem:** Teach children in a NO-problem time that they are to treat all people and things with respect. They should think about the effects of their actions and make amends for their mistakes. These rules are for life, not just for any particular incident. If children are taught these lessons, it will reduce intentionally destructive behavior. You may not, however, be able to prevent unintentional mistakes like Gene’s.

**Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:** “I know how much you enjoy playing with sticks, but you need to be thinking about what you are hitting. You need to keep your stick away from people or things that could get hurt.”

**Reveal discipline:** This incident seems to have risen unexpectedly, with no chance to reveal discipline ahead of time. Nevertheless, some discipline is indicated. Say, "You'll need to take responsibility for the damage to Mr. X's tree." Then have Gene pick up the branches and apologize to his neighbor. For the time being, Gene should not play in that neighbor's yard, until he can show he can play with sticks responsibly.

6. Patrick, 7, takes so long getting ready in the morning that he frequently misses the school bus.

**Type of problem:** PO, Attention or Power. If a child is old enough to go to school, he is old enough to be responsible for getting ready. Younger children will need more time and preplanning. They should still, however, be held accountable for getting ready and the results of being late.

**Prevent the problem:** Give children an alarm clock and show them how to set it. Have them make their lunch, check their backpacks, and choose clothes the night before. Have children get dressed first and eat last.

**Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:** "Getting ready in the morning is tough! There are a lot of things to do and remember." "I'm willing to fix breakfast for you, but it's up to you to get up on time, get dressed by yourself, and leave yourself time to eat."

**Reveal discipline:** Avoid nagging, helping, and reminding. These prevent children from learning how to be responsible for themselves. If the child misses breakfast, allow the natural consequence of hunger. Remind him he'll have another chance to get ready on time and eat breakfast tomorrow. Few children experience this consequence more than once! Another natural consequence is to leave in whatever shape they are in. They may have to tie their shoes or brush their hair on the way to school. Children may also experience consequences at school, such as receiving a tardy mark. Refuse to lie if you are required to write any excuses to the school.

If your children ride a bus, you probably live too far for them to walk to school safely. If children can run to another bus stop, go for this option. Driving a late child raises a dilemma for parents. If we repeatedly drive them, we are rewarding their lateness and are taking responsibility for getting them to school. If we must drive a late child to school, we can do so with certain restrictions or conditions. Children can pay parents a "taxi" fee, wait for the parent to get ready, or be ready that much sooner the next day. Parents can time how long it takes to drive children to school and require them to do a chore for that amount of time when they come home.

7. Ethan, 10, lied so he could help a girl friend sell candy in an area beyond his boundaries.

**Type of problem:** PO. Ethan lied to protect his privacy; he didn't want his parents to know he was helping a girl friend. Ethan knew how far he was allowed to travel on his own and intentionally defied a rule (*power*).

**Prevent the problem:** Ethan knew his boundaries, so the parents did what they could to prevent this situation. The fact that Ethan was helping someone else, however, should not go unnoticed. Express admiration for Ethan's willingness to help a friend. Comment on his willingness to do something he is normally hesitant to do (sell door-to-door), but did it to help someone else.

**Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:** "I understand your hesitancy to tell me you were going to see a girl. I know that can be an embarrassing thing to tell a parent, but you knew how far you were allowed to go. Had you asked me, I probably would have been willing to drive you to her neighborhood." If Ethan says he should be allowed to cross the dangerous street, the parent can say, "I know you feel ready to cross that street. Since it's a matter of life and death, I have to stand firm about the rule. You don't have to like the rule, but I still expect you to follow it."

**Reveal discipline:** The discipline for going beyond the neighborhood might have already been revealed. Use problem solving to decide discipline for the two issues, violating a rule and lying. Ethan can stay around the house or on his street for a few days. When his travel privileges are



restored, he will need to tell his parents where he is and call home frequently. This last part relates to the parents' ability to regain their trust. Ethan's parents might check on him. If revealed ahead of time, this act is not a breach of privacy.

Do not allow Ethan's poor judgement to overshadow his good deed. Finish by summarizing, "What you did for your friend was very kind. Next time, although it's embarrassing for you, please *tell me* you want to go somewhere far. I promise not to tease you or ask you about anything I don't need to know."

8. Dustin, 14, was more than an hour late to meet his parents at the state fair. (*When I was at the state fair, I saw a father yelling at his son about being late. He smacked him across the head a few times. I could understand the father's anger, but was appalled at the violence.*)

*Type of problem:* Chances are this is a PU problem. Dustin might have forgotten the time or gotten stuck in a long ride. Maybe something really *did* happen to him. There was probably no way for Dustin to let them know he was running late. It is also possible that Dustin didn't care enough to keep his commitment (PO). Either way, discipline is still indicated.

*Prevent the problem:* When you split up a group in a large public place, cover all the angles in the meeting plan. Most importantly, make the details and the importance of the agreement are clear. (I once waited for my parents for over an hour at an amusement park. They were angry, until they realized *they* were at the wrong location. Now, I worry whenever I go places with my family or a large group and we split up.)

*Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:* Dustin's angry parents need take a sigh of relief and get in touch with their *primary* feelings—concern and worry—and give Dustin a big hug. Then they can ask, "Do you know what time it is? We were worried something happened to you! What happened?" Hopefully, Dustin will have a good reason for being so late. If he simply lost track of time, the parents can *respectfully* address their concerns *after* Dustin explains himself. "It sounds like you were having a lot of fun and being on time wasn't on your mind. I can understand that, but we were seriously worried." Then they can problem solve.

*Reveal discipline:* The family should not separate again for awhile and use the experience in setting up future agreements. "If you want to go somewhere different the rest of this trip, one of us needs to be with you."

9. Susan, 14, was caught with drugs at school. The boy who set her up admits she was an innocent victim. (*This situation happened to a graduate's daughter. Fortunately, the mother had taken my parenting class and she and Susan were participating in the "Parents and Teens—Together" class at the time.*)

*Type of problem:* In *this* situation, it's PU. (See the Chapter 12 answer key for information on PO drug use.) The mother had talked with her about such a hypothetical situation, but neither she nor Susan ever dreamed something like this would really happen. The particular circumstances happened so fast, Susan felt confused and she waited too long, instead of immediately going to the principal herself.

*Prevent the problem:* Susan's mother can show Susan unconditional love and support. She can give Susan credit for staying "straight" and doing the best she can to stay out of trouble. (The boy got her in trouble more than she got herself into it.) Most importantly, since the boy admitted she was an innocent participant, Susan's mother can reassure her that she trusts her and believes her story.

*Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior:* Susan's mother needs to do a *lot* of F-A-X listening and problem solving with Susan. She can recognize the predicament Susan felt when she was handed the bag and her fears about being referred to court. It is *very* important, however, that Susan's mother not make excuses for her or "bail her out" of the situation. This is *Susan's* problem. Mother's responsibility is to help Susan work through her feelings and help her learn an important lesson from the experience.

**Reveal discipline:** The police and court system are setting the consequences. Susan's mother doesn't need to add any other discipline. She can point out, in a matter-of-fact, friendly way, that when Susan made the decision not to report the drugs to the principal, she was taking the risk of getting caught, which is what happened. Now she must experience the results of that choice.

The mother in this situation did all these things. She told the principal, police, and judge about the parenting class and teen group she and Susan were attending. The judge understood Susan's predicament, but the law is the law and he had to sentence her. He took all the factors into consideration and put Susan on probation until she was 16. Rather than sentencing her to jail time, he ordered her to do community service. Susan learned a rather hard, but important, lesson. Her mother was **extremely** grateful she had learned these parenting skills, because, she says, she would not have handled the situation nearly as helpfully had it happened before she took the parenting class.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

When we use *all* the tools in *The Parent's Toolshop*, we prevent problems and redirect them before they reach the point of needing discipline. Therefore, we usually don't use the discipline tools daily. If this approach is different from what you have done in the past, you might start to punish, catch yourself, and adjust your response accordingly. Practice planning responses and choosing appropriate discipline, so you can respond quickly *and* effectively in the heat of the moment.

We have finished our tour of the Parent Problem Toolbox. We now have all the tools we need to prevent and effectively respond to problems. The last section, "Step D: Maintenance Toolbox," details the last step in the parenting process—maintaining progress. The first chapter in that section is Chapter 14, "Family Council Toolset." It details several council formats and offers a review of the tools we use when planning and holding family councils. Once we learn the basics, we can decide within our individual family the format that works best for our needs.

## REFERENCES

1. For more information about the long-term consequences of spanking and other forms of corporal punishment (Some are quite surprising!), read *Plain Talk About Spanking*, published by PTAVE: Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education. You can read this book, and dozens of other free articles about corporal punishment, on the Internet at [www.nospank.org](http://www.nospank.org). You can also order a free sample copy by writing P.O. Box 1033, Alamo, CA 94507-7033 or calling (925) 831-1661. A donation is requested for bulk copies.
2. *American Medical Association's Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* (8/15/97). Research/report by Murray A. Straus, University of New Hampshire.
3. *Positive Discipline*, by Jane Nelsen (Ballantine, 1987; Revised Edition, 1996). The "Four R's of Punishment" were originally the "Three R's of Punishment." The third had two points, so I split them and changed the title to "Four R's," with the permission of Ms. Nelsen.
4. The "Four R's of Discipline" is a different title for Jane Nelsen's "Four R's of Consequences." Logical consequences are just one discipline tool, but the "Four R's of Discipline" apply to *all* discipline tools. Consequently, Ms. Nelsen gave me permission to expand on her original idea.
5. For more information about time-outs, read *Time Out: Abuses and Effective Uses*, by Jane Nelsen and H. Stephen Glenn (Empowering People, Inc., 1992).