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Helping Your Children Develop Their Self-Discipline *

By Etienne A. Gibbs, MSW, Management Consultant/Trainer

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We want our children to do the right thing, especially when they are out with their friends. We want to believe in them, but somehow, we don't feel certain that they would.

Have you ever asked yourself why you feel and act that way? Maybe the answer lies in the fact that, although you intend to, you rarely teach them how to develop their self-discipline. Or maybe it is because your parents never taught you how to develop yours.

Well, it's never too late to learn. Here are fourteen principles to set you on the right track:

1. Natural and logical consequences require children to be responsible for their own behavior.
2. Reward and punishment deny children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior.
3. Distinguish the differences between the punishment approach and the logical consequences approach to developing their self-discipline:
 - Punishment expresses the power of authority; logical consequences express the impersonal reality of the social order.
 - Punishment is rarely related to misbehavior; logical consequences are logically related to misbehavior.

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- Punishment focuses on what is past; logical consequences are concerned with present and future behavior.
 - Punishment tells children that they are bad; logical consequences imply no element of moral judgment.
 - Punishment is associated with a threat, either open or concealed; logical consequences are based on good will, not on retaliation.
 - Punishment demands obedience; logical consequences permit choices.
4. Natural consequences are those that permit children to learn from the natural order of the physical world.
 5. Logical consequences are those that permit children to learn from the reality of the social order.
 6. For consequences to be effective, children involved must see them as logical.
 7. The purpose of using natural and logical consequences is to motivate children to make responsible decisions, not to force their submission.
 8. Apply the logical consequences approach in the proper sequence:
 - Provide choices and accept the child's decision while using a friendly tone of voice that communicates your good will.
 - While following through, assure the child that he may try again later.
 - If the misbehavior is repeated, extend the time that must elapse before he may try again.
 9. Consequences are effective only if you do not use the hidden motives of winning and controlling.
 10. Be both firm and kind when correcting children's misbehavior. Firmness refers to your follow-through behavior; kindness refers to the manner in which you present them with choices.
 11. Talk less, listen and act more. Lead them into the proper behavior by setting the example.
 12. When you do things for children that they could do for themselves, you are robbing them of the opportunity for self-respect and responsibility.
 13. Avoid fighting or quarreling; they indicate a lack of respect for the other person. Avoid giving in; it indicates disrespect for yourself.
 14. Be patient! It takes time for natural and logical consequences to become effective.

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Follow these principles and watch your relationship with your children and spouse improve, the self-discipline of your children increase, and, perhaps most importantly, your patience and love for them return.

Remember: When you help your children to maximize their potential, everyone wins. When you don't, we all lose.

* Based on the principles of STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) developed by Don Dinkmeyer, Ph.D. and Gary D. McKay, Ph.D.

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Etienne A. Gibbs, MSW, Management Consultant and Trainer, conducts seminars, lectures, and writes articles on his theme: "... *helping you maximize your potential.*" Take a free health survey at

Raising Happy Diabetic Kids Part III Help Your Child Develop Self-Control

By Russell Turner

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This is the third and final article in a series I wrote about raising happy diabetic kids. While Juvenile Diabetes makes this job tougher the information in these articles applies to raising any child. Diabetic children aren't any different from other children. Their pancreas just doesn't work. However, the emotional toll that diabetes takes on a child, even when blood glucose levels are under fairly good control, must be taken into account whenever we consider what is best for them. We can be very helpful in raising children who are emotionally strong and better able to avoid and overcome these stresses brought on by diabetes by making sure they are raised with a strong foundation of these three basic life skills. Self-Confidence, Self-Reliance, and Self-Control.

It All Starts With Discipline:

In order for our children to develop self-control it is our responsibility to teach them discipline. Discipline is the part of raising our children that causes us the most sleeplessness. It's probably also the part that a lot of parents don't think they get quite right. The thoughts of the "experts" have changed so much that the "old fashioned" discipline we were taught and what has become the so-called "permissive" new tradition are so far apart several things generally happen. We ignore what we were taught, or we ignore the new conventional wisdom, or we become confused and don't carry out our responsibilities properly. I'm as guilty of this confusion from time to time as anybody else is. When you think about it discipline should have three goals.

It must pave the way for our children to acquire Self-Control or self-discipline.

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It must be applied in such a way as to allow our children to also develop self-confidence and self-reliance.

Parents must be comfortable with implementing it and feel it works.

The old fashioned "thou shalt not" style discipline and the new permissive style lead to two completely different outcomes in children. With the old fashioned style we end up with children who don't learn to make choices or decisions well for themselves. They find acceptance only if they "do as they are told" and it teaches them in turn to exert power and control over others. On the other hand with a permissive style of discipline our children have too many choices and never know where they really stand. This can lead to insecurity. (and low self-esteem) Our children get used to having their own way and they learn to negotiate and manipulate. We only step in when the behavior goes too far. It always goes too far, they're kids.

How To Develop Self-Control:

By raising our children within a framework of proper discipline we encourage self-control in them. We aren't going to be the boss forever. We are teaching our children to be responsible for themselves. There are three main components to Self-Control. They are habit (hanging up their coat when they come in or doing homework before watching TV), seeing the greater good (doing without something right now in order to get something better later), and the ability to make moral judgments (doing things

just because it's the right thing to do). We need to teach our children to think ahead about the consequences of their actions. They should also be taught to accept responsibility for what they do. They need to be taught to make proper rules and to stick to them.

Our kids need to learn to accept disappointment. And also to trust their own judgment. When children learn to see what needs to be done, stick with it until it is done, and not do it just because someone told them to or because they know it will make us happy, then we can pat ourselves on the back.

This is our goal in teaching our children good diabetes control. It will help them realize not only that they have to do it but that they should do it. We as parents of diabetic children have been entrusted with a very difficult and special task. By holding up our end of the responsibility for helping our children develop self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-control, we are preparing them to grow into adults that number one can and will take proper care of their health. And will in turn raise the next generation of happy kids, our grandchildren.

Russell Turner is the father of a 10 year old Type 1 diabetic daughter. After diagnosis he found all kinds of medical information about diabetes on the internet. What he couldn't find was information about how to prepare his child and family to live with this disease. He started a website for parents of newly diagnosed diabetic children <http://mychildhasdiabetes.com>

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