

# Encouraging good behaviour

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Most children will learn how to behave well if the environment in which they grow up is nurturing and caring.

The idea that “punishment” has an important place in the rearing of children is misleading. Too often punishment is used to satisfy the need of adults to get back at the child. The child often cannot understand what they have done wrong. Frequently, children fail to learn from being punished.

Punishment can give rise to anger and resentment. These feelings do not encourage improved behaviour.

*Parental disapproval of the behaviour not the child may help a child learn how to behave acceptably. Where the environment a child is raised in is a positive one, parents' approval and disapproval are powerful tools. A secure and well-loved child will usually want to please the people she/he loves.*

*A happy relationship between a parent and a child is the most important foundation on which to build acceptable behaviour.*

## Provide a positive environment

Children are more likely to grow up behaving well if they are:

- loved, valued and told how important they are
- shown how to behave well because the adults around them behave well
- not expected to behave in ways which are beyond their developmental capacities
- given clear rules and parents are consistent about them
- supervised well and kept occupied with appropriate activities
- provided with predictable and sensible routines
- having their physical and emotional needs well attended to

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## *Things that encourage good behaviour*

- positive attention (hugs and praise) given for acceptable behaviour is more effective than criticism and punishment for things the child gets wrong
- ignore minor misbehaviour and intervene only when there are serious problems or a child is in danger. Children learn to tune out or turn off when they are constantly “got at”. Their self-esteem suffers if they never get anything “right”
- ensure the child understands what is right not just what is wrong. Do not just describe what the child has done wrong. Tell him/her how to do it right
- clear communications is basic to effective discipline. If children do not hear or understand our message, they cannot do what is asked of them. Therefore, it is important to gain the child’s attention and to keep the message short and specific

*Each child has a different personality and a different set of needs.*

*Adults need to adapt to these, avoid comparisons as much as possible and learn from the child as they grow.*

*No child is well-behaved all the time.*

*As adults, we have a responsibility to guide children's behaviour so that they learn from their mistakes and experience the pleasure of our approval.*

Source...EPOCH NZ Website



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