



UNIVERSITY OF  
FLORIDA

EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

FCS 2187-Eng

## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Guiding Your Grandchild's Behavior - Part 2<sup>1</sup>

Millie Ferrer and Angela Falcone<sup>2</sup>



**Goal:** To provide grandparents with information for guiding children's behavior.

You have admirably accepted the role as the caregiver for your grandchild. With this new role comes the responsibility of teaching your grandchild appropriate behaviors or, in other words, guiding your grandchild's behavior.

As the last lesson noted (Part 1), all children will misbehave at times. There's a good chance your grandchild will have a temper tantrum, talk back, or act inappropriately. It is important to know how to effectively respond to misbehavior.

There are basically two techniques parents use to change unacceptable behavior: discipline or punishment. The difference between discipline and punishment is often

misunderstood. Discipline is the act of teaching your child self-control and the consequences of his\* actions. Punishing is the act of stopping the immediate behavior.

### Discipline

Discipline can be seen as a positive way of guiding children's behavior. It teaches them to act responsibly even when parents aren't around. Parents who are consistently warm and loving and who explain reasons for rules are more likely to see positive results. Children need reasonable limits and they need to know what will happen if they overstep their boundaries. For example:

*House Rule: Be respectful to others by not hitting or name-calling.*

**Situation:** Your eight-year-old grandson is playing with a friend. He is arguing with him and calling him names.



1. This document is FCS 2187-Eng, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: January 2002. Reviewed by Anne Fugate, Project Coordinator, University of Florida, for Florida's CYFAR State Strengthening Grant, Maisie Ross, Extension Agent III, and Stephanie Toelle, Extension Agent III. Thanks to Erica Murphy, UF undergraduate student, for her support and assistance and Jason Green for his original artwork. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>
2. Millie Ferrer, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Human Development, and Angela Falcone, Ed.S., Graduate Assistant, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



**Response:** In a calm tone of voice, you tell your grandchild that inappropriate words hurt others and his behavior is unacceptable. Stress how his behavior makes his friend feel. Tell him that if he continues this inappropriate behavior their playtime together will end.

*Your Purpose: By doing this you demonstrate two things. One, you are giving him a choice, and two, you are presenting the consequences of the choice he makes.*

**Outcome #1:** Your grandchild continues to misbehave. You decide to end the play session, thus keeping your word. Following through with consequences is an effective part of discipline.



**Outcome #2:** Your grandchild stops the inappropriate behavior. You praise him for treating his friend with kindness and respect.

### Punishment

In the minds of many parents, punishment means spanking. However, spanking is only one type of punishment. Scolding, bullying, threats, or anything else intended to stop the misbehavior is also considered punishment. Punishment is a penalty used with children when their behavior is considered wrong. It gives them a sense of what not to do, but it

does not teach them anything. It does not help children understand why their behavior is inappropriate and what appropriate behavior is. For example:

*House Rule: Be respectful to others by not hitting or name-calling.*

**Situation:** Your eight-year-old grandson is playing with a friend. He is arguing with him and calling him names.



**Response:** In an angry tone of voice, you yell at him to stop fighting.

*Your purpose: By doing this you attempt to stop the behavior.*



**Outcome #1:** Your grandchild continues to misbehave. You scream louder at him and spank him in order to stop his misbehavior.

**Outcome #2:** Your grandchild temporarily stops the misbehavior yet feels humiliated by your actions.



Unfortunately, he is likely to misbehave again because he didn't learn anything. Your grandchild is unaware of the effects of his behavior towards the other child.

Some parents believe that spanking is the only way that children mind. However, spanking as a means of punishment serves as a release of the parent's feelings. It does not help the child learn appropriate behavior. In addition, when a parent models angry aggressive behavior, the parent is showing the child that it is all right for a person to hit another person in order to get what we want.

### **Positive Ways for Guiding Children's Behavior**

In raising your grandchild, you can use alternatives to punishment. All parents struggle to find the best form of discipline. It does not matter what age children are, they tend to cooperate better when they know what is required of them. Having clear rules and consequences tends to reduce power struggles. Children need to know that there is an adult in charge guiding them and keeping them safe.

#### Rules

Rules are guidelines set up to help children learn appropriate behaviors and keep them safe. They are clear, firm statements about the behavior you expect from your child. It's important to understand that too many rules can confuse, frustrate, or overwhelm children. On the other hand, having too few rules can make children feel uncared for, lost, out of control, or unaware of what appropriate behavior is.



Getting children to follow rules can be a challenge. Here are some guidelines for creating family rules that children can follow and learn from.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR RULES**

1. Include children in making rules and consequences whenever possible. Children are more likely to follow rules they help create.
2. State rules impersonally. For example, state the rule as "Balls are for playing with outside," instead of "You can't play ball inside."
3. State rules positively. For example, "Friends can come over when I am at home," not "You can't have friends over when I'm not here."
4. Have a plan of action if the rules are broken. When children know the consequences for breaking a rule, they learn to take responsibility for their own actions.
5. Rules need to be appropriate to your grandchild's age. Make sure that your grandchild understands the rules and that they match his abilities and skills.

#### Consequences

There are two kinds of consequences parents can use to teach children to make responsible decisions about their behavior. One is called a natural consequence, and the other is a logical consequence.

*Natural consequences* are a direct result of certain behaviors. For example, a child who does not want to eat dinner goes hungry. Whenever possible, use natural consequences. Natural consequences provide a way for children and teens to learn from their own experiences.

*Logical consequences* are those that are imposed as a result of behavior but are logically related to the behavior. For example, dirty clothes not found in the hamper do not get washed. Therefore, the child must wash his own clothes.

By using natural and logical consequences, you are not blaming or judging the child for his acts. Instead, you are giving him an opportunity to recognize a mistake and change his behavior.

Logical consequences differ from punishment in that logical consequences are directly related to what the child has done. On the other hand, punishment may have no logical relationship to what the child has done. For example, in spanking a child for not putting his clothes in the hamper, there is no direct relationship between the behavior and the spanking. The punishment just shows the parent's anger and may make the child resentful.

In the following examples, read the situation and decide if each response is a natural consequence, logical consequence, or punishment.

**â Five year old Nelly uses her crayons to color the walls.**

- A. You tell her that crayons are used to color on paper not walls. You give her the materials needed to clean the wall. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. You spank her and leave her alone in the room while she cries. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.

**ã You tell your twelve year old grandson, Robert, "It's going to get cold outside," but he leaves the house without a jacket.**

- A. You tell him, "I told you so," and ground him for a week because he did not listen to you. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Your grandchild gets cold and you don't say anything else to him about his decision to not take a jacket. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.

**ä Sixteen-year-old Angela stays out later than the agreed upon curfew.**

- A. You tell her that the next time she goes out, she has to come back an hour earlier because she was an hour late this time. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. You think to yourself that if she cannot respect the agreed upon time then she needs to suffer for her behavior. You tell her that she cannot be in the Drama Club with her friends anymore. This is a \_\_\_\_\_.

*(For the answers, please see page 6.)*

When you use new discipline procedures, your grandchild's behavior may get worse before it gets better. Change comes slowly. With consistency and patience you can make the change. It is very important for you to stick to your plan. Don't give up!

## Tips for Healthy Development for Your Grandchildren

As you learn new ways to manage your grandchildren's behavior, you will also need to keep in mind age-appropriate expectations. Children exhibit certain unique qualities at different ages. The following tips are grouped by developmental stages. Review them and consider how they relate to your grandchild's stage.

### *Infants*



- Attend to an infant's cry – this will develop trust.
- Establish a routine and predictable schedule – this will create a sense of security.
- Talk and sing to your grandchild and imitate his sounds – this will develop his language skills.

### *Toddlers*

- Keep your environment safe and childproof – this will allow him to be curious and explore safely.
- Help your grandchild develop a sense of independence by offering him choices. For example, ask him “Do you want to wear your sneakers or your sandals?”
- Have appropriate expectations. For example, understand that he won't “play nicely” with another toddler because he does not know how to share yet.

### *Pre-schoolers*



- Be patient while listening and responding to your grandchild's many questions – this will help to create a healthy self-concept.
- Establish clear rules and limits – this will guide expected behavior.
- Encourage your grandchild to play – it is through play that children learn best.

### *School-age children*

- Keep an eye on your grandchild's activities and friendships – he still needs your guidance in learning acceptable behaviors.
- Provide support and encouragement for your grandchild's hobbies and interests. No matter what his skill level, too many demands on a child to succeed discourages him.
- Be consistent with discipline by setting clear rules and consequences – children need to know what is expected of them.

### *Adolescents*

- Recognize your grandchild's need for independence and a unique identity – work to create a supportive and loving environment for your grandchild to develop.
- Be aware of the emotional and physical changes your adolescent is going through. Be patient – expect moodiness and self-doubt.

- Listen to your grandchild before jumping to conclusions – this will open lines of communication and trust.

In summary, as a guardian for your grandchild you have taken on a major and admirable responsibility. The discipline and rules you teach your grandchild will have everlasting effects.

#### Answers to page 4:

- 1A. Logical
- 1B. Punishment
- 2A. Punishment
- 2B. Natural
- 3A. Logical
- 3B. Punishment

\*This publication uses “he”, “his”, or “him” to represent children of both genders

#### References:

- Berk, L. (2000). *Infants, children, and adolescents* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brooks, J. (2001). *Parenting* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company
- Ferrer, M. (1997). Guiding children's behavior. *Childcare Centers Connections: National Network for Childcare Connection*, 7, 2.
- Ferrer, M. (1999). *Success and the single parent: positive parenting-understanding children's behavior*. University of Florida, Cooperative Extension. 8pp. FCS 2142
- Ferrer, M. & McCrea, S. (2000). *Couples considering a blended family*. University

of Florida, Cooperative Extension. 3pp. FCS 2148.

- Ferrer, M. & McCrea, S. (2000). *Let's talk about temper tantrums*. University of Florida, Cooperative Extension. 3pp. FCS 2153
- Forehand, R., & Long, N. (1996). *Parenting the strong-willed child*. Chicago: Contemporary Books.
- Hammer, T. & P. Turner. (2001). *Parenting in contemporary society* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Oesterreich, Leslie. (2001). *Ages & stages: 9 - 11 years*. Iowa State University, University Extension. p.153. PM 1530i.
- Turecki, S. (1989). *The difficult child*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Williams, D. (2000). *Grandparents raising our children's children*. University of Idaho Cooperative Extension. Moscow, ID: Ag Communications .