

Using Consequences to Shape Behavior

Parents can often allow children to experience the natural consequence of a behavior. By experiencing the consequence the child learns what does not work. However, some consequences create danger or harm and we must save them from those consequences.

Parents can create logical consequences that help children avoid harmful natural consequences. The same consequence is not always effective at stopping every behavior. The consequence or punishment must fit the behavior.

Good Logical Consequences

Follow the 3 “R’s”

- **Related** to the behavior
- **Respectful** to the child (not embarrassing)
- **Reasonable** amount of time or severity to match the behavior

Always remember that the child will choose to change their behavior. A good logical consequence will speed and accommodate that choice.

It is important to remember that children may misbehave in order to get a need met. What the child wants or needs is not always easy to discover. However, a common need that triggers misbehavior is attention. A child needs and desires your attention. When you punish a child they receive attention. When a child is desperate for attention they will seek punishment to get attention. When a child needs attention we must find a helpful way to give them attention, without reinforcing the bad behavior. Review the Ignore/Praise strategy presented in session 3.

