

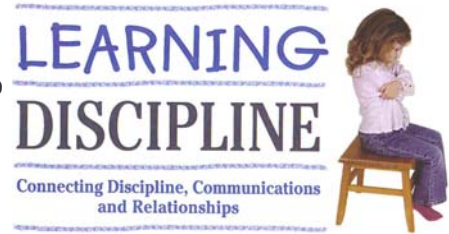


# Helping Hands Christian Learning Center

"Let Us Make a Difference in Your Child's Life"

## Discipline, Not Time Out

Parents frequently ask professional child care providers and experts, "When do I start disciplining?" or "How should I discipline?" The answer is simple and complex – childcare experts recommend you start disciplining a child as soon as she can understand what you are doing and can learn why you are doing it. This occurs usually at about 18 months, although some children may be closer to 2 years of age before discipline can become effective.



**Let's discuss two types of discipline.** The first type involves changing behavior that is undesirable, making sure that the behavior you are curbing isn't just part of the normal developmental range of behaviors. An example would be if your child ran into a busy street. Since being injured by a car can have serious consequences, this kind of behavior has to be stopped. But if she is bouncing up and down waiting for her ice cream, this is normal behavior and should not be responded to in a negative manner. Experts recommend that when a child is behaving inappropriately, parents and childcare providers should *use redirection, not time out*. Get the child interested in another activity. This technique works when your enthusiasm for the new activity is used. Sometimes giving the child a choice of two new activities is very effective, too. These are activities you have chosen ahead of time, and either one will work for you, but the child has the ultimate say, and this empowers her self-esteem.

**"Time-out" or "reflection" does not work at this age because the child does not understand how to reflect on the bad behavior.** Her brain has not matured enough to understand this concept. "Time-out" only gives the parent a break from the behavior; it teaches the child nothing.

The second type of discipline is more difficult to teach, and therefore must be reinforced at home, in school and with child care services. **It involves training your child to direct and manage her behavior toward reaching a specific goal.** That goal might be mastery of a skill, success in sports, arts, or a craft. The attainment of any of these goals requires discipline. Sometimes a very talented child may not have the discipline to train for the thing she desires. At the same time, a less talented child may reach a desired goal because she has learned how to discipline herself.

Self-discipline becomes even more important when a child becomes a young adult. It is the disciplined teenager who can get good grades in school and can successfully resist the attractions of drugs, skipping school, and other forms of juvenile delinquency.

### How do you teach this second form of discipline?

It is best to start as early as possible with correction of dangerous or unwanted behaviors. Encourage your child not to give up on a task just because it is hard or takes too long – and make sure that the childcare services you use adhere to this philosophy as well. Show your child practice and hard work pay off with increased rewards.

These rewards need to be very tangible at first, such as praise, a sticker or stamp. Later, the satisfaction of "doing well" will be its own reward. So remember both types of discipline and that it must be applied fairly, consistently by all members of your childcare team. The first type keeps your child out of trouble. The second type teaches her how to live successfully. Both are very important. Both require your active involvement as a parent.