

Safe and Strong Together: Hug Don't Hit

What is discipline?

Discipline teaches a child the right way to express their needs and wants by helping them learn how to understand and follow rules. The best discipline works without hitting or causing pain.

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and the American Academy of Pediatrics do not support physical discipline. "Safe & Strong Together" is about making Children's Hospital of Wisconsin a place that is safe and healthy for everyone. Help your child grow strong:

- Focus on the positive things they do.
- Praise and reward good behavior.
- Expect your child to act like a child. They are still learning and growing.
- Expect and plan for when your child will need help with how they act. Listen to your child so you know how to help.

What does "Hug Don't Hit" teach my child?

- Children **can** learn good behaviors.
- Hitting and violence are **not** OK.
- Violence does **not** solve problems.

What can parents do?

Keep your child safe. Teach your child how to act by behaving that way yourself. Children learn a lot by watching adults.

Young: Toddler to Preschool

- If your child is acting out, show or give them something to play with. This is called distraction.
- Give choices everyone can agree on. Only ask yes or no questions if a "no" is OK. You can say "It's cold outside, you need to bundle up. Do you want to wear your sweater or a jacket?" Tell your child what the results of their decision will be. "After you put your jacket on, you can go outside."
- Children do best when they know what to expect. Have routines like regular meals, naps, and bed times. Start a bedtime routine. This might be brushing teeth and reading a book before saying goodnight.
- Offer praise and attention for good behaviors. Over time, this will work better than punishment for bad behaviors.
- Make it easy to stay out of trouble. Keep expensive or breakable things out of reach. Safety-proof outlets. Hide electrical cords so your child cannot see them or touch them. Use safety gates and locks to keep children out of unsafe areas.

- Use time-outs. Tell your child what behaviors are not OK. If they misbehave, take them to a timeout area. This should be somewhere safe but boring. It should not have fun things to do or see. Return them to the timeout area if they try to leave. Set a time limit for time out. This is usually one minute for every year of age. When the time is up and your child has calmed down, they can go back to playing.

School age: Kindergarten to High School

- Have age-appropriate rules and clear results or consequences for their decisions. Rules should be easy to understand and always enforced. Some examples might be no hitting or no name-calling. Follow through with consequences if rules are not followed.
- Offer praise and attention for good behaviors. “I like how you picked up your toys without being asked. Good job!” It can take practice to notice your child being good.
- Put good behaviors in writing. This is called a behavioral contract. It can help teach behaviors. Include consequences for not following the rules. Give rewards like stickers for good behaviors and choices. Your child can earn a treat like a trip to the zoo when they have earned a certain number of rewards.
- Take away toys or privileges for misbehavior. If your child throws a toy, take the toy away.

Why isn't hitting helpful?

- Hitting does not teach our values. Children need to be safe and healthy to grow.
- Hitting may stop a behavior, but it does not teach the child how to behave. Over time, hitting causes more behavior problems.
- Hitting increases the risk of health problems, anger, and depression as adults. People who were physically disciplined may have problems getting along with others or getting in trouble with the law.
- Hitting increases the risk of injury and abuse.

Where can I get more information?

You can ask staff for other teaching sheets that may be helpful: Distraction Techniques, Discipline and Guidance for Early Years to Age Five, Temper Tantrums, Taming Temper Tantrums, Making and Enforcing Rules.

If you would like help learning how to discipline your child, call (414) 671-0566 for the Parent Helpline or 2-1-1 for local community resources or go to chw.org/triplep for the Triple P Positive Parenting Program.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.