

Quick Fixes for Discipline Problems

Three year old Quinn walks into play group and yells "I don't like you, get away from me!" to his best friends who attempt to greet him with open arms. He is quickly asked by Mom not to speak to his friends that way, and to use a sweet voice and kind words. He wraps his arms around Mommy's neck and turns his nose up at the group. Mom, embarrassed, feels badly for Quinn, but also feels sorry for his friends who are maintaining smiles. Quinn decides to separate from Mom, and begins to throw building blocks at any nearby child. Mom feels like a failure, and wants to help him modify these behaviors. Although she has tried many tactics to diminish these behaviors and replace them with others, it has been a challenge. Puzzled, Mom wants to know what she is doing wrong.

Every parent has found themselves in similar situations. The real question here is not what is she doing wrong, but what should she do next? If you find that one discipline tool, or behavior modification fails then move onto the next. If one discipline tactic that use to work is no longer working, then you must move to plan B. and maybe even C. All children are unique individuals, and what works for one may not work for another. As you are observing an inappropriate behavior by your child make sure and stay calm. Take a deep breath as you are deciding which tactic may be best to utilize at that particular moment in time. If you become very angry, then the entire situation escalates. Use as few words as possible to express your expectations to your child. You want them to not only hear you, but to "listen" to you. When expressing your feelings to them focus on the positive behavior you want repeated, and not the negative one they are presently displaying. Mom may want to begin her sentence, "Quinn I really like it when you speak nicely to your friends, and play nicely with your toys."

Flexibility is the key, according to Dr. Wyckoff, Ph.D., co-author of *Discipline Without Shouting or Spanking*. Wyckoff explains that when a parent is disciplining they are demonstrating to their child how to deal with problems. For every discipline problem, there are many solutions.

Situation #1 A common discipline problem for most families is when a child reaches to touch something dangerous. If quickly and firmly calling out "No!" is not affective try yelling their name, stop, or danger. "No" loses its affect if used too often. Touching and exploring is how children learn, it is truly a part of development, it's not necessarily defiance.

Situation #2 "Turn off that t.v. and pick up your toys!" Transitions are not easy for most children and they need preparation and practice in order to prepare themselves for a change. Whether a child needs to clean up their manipulatives in a classroom center, or the toys in the living room at home, they must be cued by an adult. Clean up, (transition songs), work very well. Explaining to your child you have three minutes to put the blocks back, and I'm going to help you certainly encourages him to get the job done. If your child refuses, then a stronger discipline tactic must come into play. For instance, "Because you are having a hard time remembering to pick up your toys we will practice it a lot." Toys of course can be put in a time out, and therefore taken away if not returned to their proper place. Children must first understand what your expectations are and then have it modeled to them, in order for them to get it.

Suggested reading for think-quick discipline tools are *Discipline Without Shouting or Spanking*, *Children Who Say No When You Want Them to Say Yes*, and *The Discipline Book*. Most importantly remember to keep your cool, take deep breaths, and remember children don't really make us angry, it's our thoughts about their behavior that actually make us angry.