

## “Modern” Parenting

Dr. Matt Sanders

An elderly gentleman came up to me the other day and declared: “Kids today, just don’t have enough discipline. Back when I was a kid, if you misbehaved, you got a swift clip around the ear and you knew not to do it again.”

From talking further with him I discovered that he held no stock with what he saw as “modern” approaches to parenting. It appeared to him that nowadays parents ignored the use of punishment as a deterrent to unacceptable behavior.

So are we turning our backs on good old-fashioned values and substituting them with slick social science terminology and warm fuzzy feeling philosophies?

Not from where I stand we aren’t.

Teaching children self-control, how to follow rules, behave acceptably, and respect others isn’t something that has ceased to be fundamental to effective parenting just because we are about to approach the new millennium.

So why do we see so many children misbehaving?

While the world of today may be very different to that of our grandparents, one thing that hasn’t changed is that being a parent is a demanding and responsible role most often learned through trial and error. There is no “right” way to bring up children. Instead, as parents we decide what values, skills and behaviors we wish to encourage in our children and then go about trying to achieve those goals to the best of our ability.

Today, with many parents both working fulltime, an extended family often not available for guidance and advice on parenting, increasing numbers of single-parent families, and the added social influences of television, movies, videos, computer games and the internet, it’s not surprising that many parents sometimes find it difficult to deal effectively with misbehavior.

Fortunately though, time has also allowed us to learn a lot more about why children behave the way they do. Many years of research by psychologists has helped us develop positive practical approaches for everyday mums and dads dealing with difficult behavior in children.

These approaches don’t involve harsh punishments such as hitting, smacking or yelling, but instead concentrate on promoting children’s development through a loving, caring home while at the same time managing difficult behavior in a constructive and non-hurtful way.

They have proven to be effective through research, testing and practice and they don’t make parents feel guilty or inadequate, or children feel angry and resentful.

Positive parenting also emphasizes helping children learn the skills they need to get on well with others, to communicate their ideas, feelings and opinions, and to manage their emotions — aspects critical to promoting self-esteem.

# raise & Shine

Healthy children—body, heart and mind.

Effective parenting is not about letting children do what they want, whenever they want. This will only lead to self-centered children who have problems managing their emotions. The better alternative is the consistent and predictable use of assertive discipline within a safe environment and plenty of time for parents and children to be together.

Assertive discipline doesn't mean punishment.

Rather, parents should deal with misbehavior quickly, decisively and consistently and apply appropriate logical consequences such as the removal of an activity or toy that is at the centre of the problem. Clearly expressed family rules that tell the child what to do such as "Use a pleasant voice if you want some help," rather than "Don't whine," should be backed up with a consequence that's relevant to the situation.

In this way, children learn to accept responsibility for their own behavior and to become aware of the needs of others. They learn what behavior is acceptable, what is not, and what will happen if they misbehave. They will also develop a positive view of both themselves and their parents and are much less likely to develop behavior problems in later years.

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*For local resources on Positive Parenting support for common behavior issues such as tantrums, whining, disobedience, bedtime problems and more contact Raise & Shine at 707-463-1233 or visit [www.raiseandshine.org](http://www.raiseandshine.org) for a schedule of free workshops, classes and private consultations in your area.*

