

Sensible Consequences

What is the concern?

At some point, all children misbehave. Parents can help their children learn better behavior by setting clear limits, using proper discipline, and having their children practice the desired behavior.

What will my child learn from sensible consequences and limits?

Sensible consequences involve parents acting on misbehaviors right away and giving a consequence that is equal to or fits the seriousness of the misbehavior. Consequences teach children to be responsible and to think about possible negative results if they misbehave.

Sensible consequences not only stop problem behaviors – they also teach children how to make up for what they have done, prevent future problems, and help them practice new skills.

What are some examples of sensible consequences?

- **Loss of Privilege** – After misbehavior, remove the activity or object that is logically tied to that misbehavior. For example, if toys are left out in the family room and your child is expected to clean up after playing, he will not be allowed to play with the toys for a specified period of time.
- **Positive Practice** – Have your child practice the correct way of behaving when misbehavior occurs. This type of punishment educates as well as disciplines. It teaches the child the correct behavior and punishes the misbehavior. For instance, if your child runs down the aisle at the store, he must walk slowly down the aisle three times.
- **Time Out** – Remove your child from enjoyable activities when she needs to calm down, does something dangerous, or breaks a known rule. For example, if your child is aggressive or clearly breaks an established rule, she should go to time out immediately with a brief explanation. “You hit your sister, so you have to go to time out.”

What are the steps in applying a sensible consequence?

- 1) Decide on the consequence and tell your child what you plan to do in response to misbehavior. If the misbehavior occurs frequently, you can warn her before it happens again. For example: “Your toys are all over the family room floor. If you decide not to put them away, you will not be allowed to play with them for one day.”
- 2) If your child still engages in the misbehavior after you state the sensible consequence, **follow through** with the consequence. **DO NOT** give in or fight with him about the consequence. Also, **DO NOT** lecture or argue.
- 3) If your child refuses to cooperate with the sensible consequence, use time out as a cooling off period and then try again.



Tips to Remember:

- Act on misbehaviors right away.
- Use sensible consequences: loss of privilege or positive practice.
- If necessary, use time out as a cooling off period, then have your child go through the sensible consequence.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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