

# Positive Discipline

IS IN YOUR HANDS



## A Resource for Parents and Caregivers of Infants to Teens

**Catholic Family  
Services of Durham**  
905-725-3513  
[www.cfsdurham.com](http://www.cfsdurham.com)

**Conseil scolaire Viamonde**  
(French School Board)  
1-888-583-5383  
[www.csviamonde.ca](http://www.csviamonde.ca)

**Conseil scolaire de district  
catholique Centre-Sud**  
(French Catholic District  
School Board)  
1-800-274-3764  
[www.csdccs.edu.on.ca](http://www.csdccs.edu.on.ca)

**Durham Behaviour  
Management Services**  
905-666-6238  
1-800-387-0642  
[www.durham.ca/childrensservices](http://www.durham.ca/childrensservices)

**Durham Children's  
Aid Society**  
905-433-1551  
1-800-461-8140  
[www.durhamcas.ca](http://www.durhamcas.ca)

**Durham Region  
Children's Services**  
905-666-6238  
1-800-387-0642  
[www.durham.ca/childrensservices](http://www.durham.ca/childrensservices)

**Durham Region  
Health Department,  
Infant Development  
Services**  
905-668-2020  
1-800-841-2729  
[www.durham.ca/health](http://www.durham.ca/health)

**Durham Region  
Health Department,  
Durham Health  
Connection Line**  
905-668-2020  
1-800-841-2729  
[www.durham.ca/health](http://www.durham.ca/health)

**Family and Community  
Action Program**  
905-686-6466  
1-800-214-7163

**Family Services Durham**  
905-666-6240  
1-866-840-6697  
[www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca)

## Where to Go For Help



**Girls Incorporated  
of Durham**  
905-428-8111  
1-877-447-5795  
[www.girlsinc-durham.org](http://www.girlsinc-durham.org)

**Kinark Child and  
Family Services**  
905-433-0241 or  
1-866-929-0061  
[www.kinark.on.ca](http://www.kinark.on.ca)  
Centralized Intake:  
1-888-454-6275

**Oshawa Community  
Health Centre**  
905-723-0036  
[www.ochc.ca](http://www.ochc.ca)

**P.R.Y.D.E. Learning Centres**  
905-430-2774  
[www.prydelearningcentres.ca](http://www.prydelearningcentres.ca)

**Resources for Exceptional Children  
and Youth - Durham Region**  
905-427-8862 or  
1-800-968-0066  
[www.rfecydurham.com](http://www.rfecydurham.com)

**Rose of Durham  
Young Parents  
Support Services**  
905-432-3622  
[www.roseofdurham.com](http://www.roseofdurham.com)

**The Durham District  
School Board**  
905-666-5500  
1-800-265-3968  
[www.durham.edu.on.ca](http://www.durham.edu.on.ca)

**The Youth Centre**  
905-428-1212  
[www.theyouthcentre.ca](http://www.theyouthcentre.ca)

**YMCA Ontario Early  
Years Centre**  
905-619-4565 ext. 310  
(Ajax Main Site)  
905-697-3171  
(Bowmanville Main Site)  
905-839-3007  
(Pickering Site)  
[www.ontarioearlyyears.ca](http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca)

**YWCA Durham Ontario  
Early Years Centre**  
905-723-9922  
[www.ontarioearlyyears.ca](http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca)



Durham Health Connection Line  
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729  
[durham.ca/health](http://durham.ca/health)



If you require this information in an accessible  
format, contact 1-800-841-2729

# Introduction

**This is a booklet for parents and caregivers to use with children from infancy to teens, prepared by the Positive Discipline Coalition of Durham Region. This resource offers parents and caregivers positive discipline strategies to enhance their parenting skills.**



**Positive Discipline means encouraging, teaching and guiding children towards understanding what behaviour is okay and what behaviour is not okay.**



## **We believe that parents and caregivers:**

- are important in the lives of children
- are responsible to guide and teach children to become healthy, responsible adults
- influence what kind of person their children will grow up to be, through their discipline choices
- recognize that disciplining children may be challenging
- appreciate that positive discipline requires time and patience
- understand that discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline teaches and guides children rather than forcing them to obey
- realize that while punishment may stop a behaviour temporarily, positive discipline will have a lasting impact
- understand that, in order to change children's behaviour, the adult must change the way they interact with the child

**If you have questions about tailoring the content of this resource to meet your child's special needs, contact local community agencies listed on the back.**



# What is Positive Discipline?

## Positive Discipline is not physical punishment

Positive Discipline teaches and guides children so they feel safe and secure.

Be positive with discipline because how you teach is as important as what you teach.

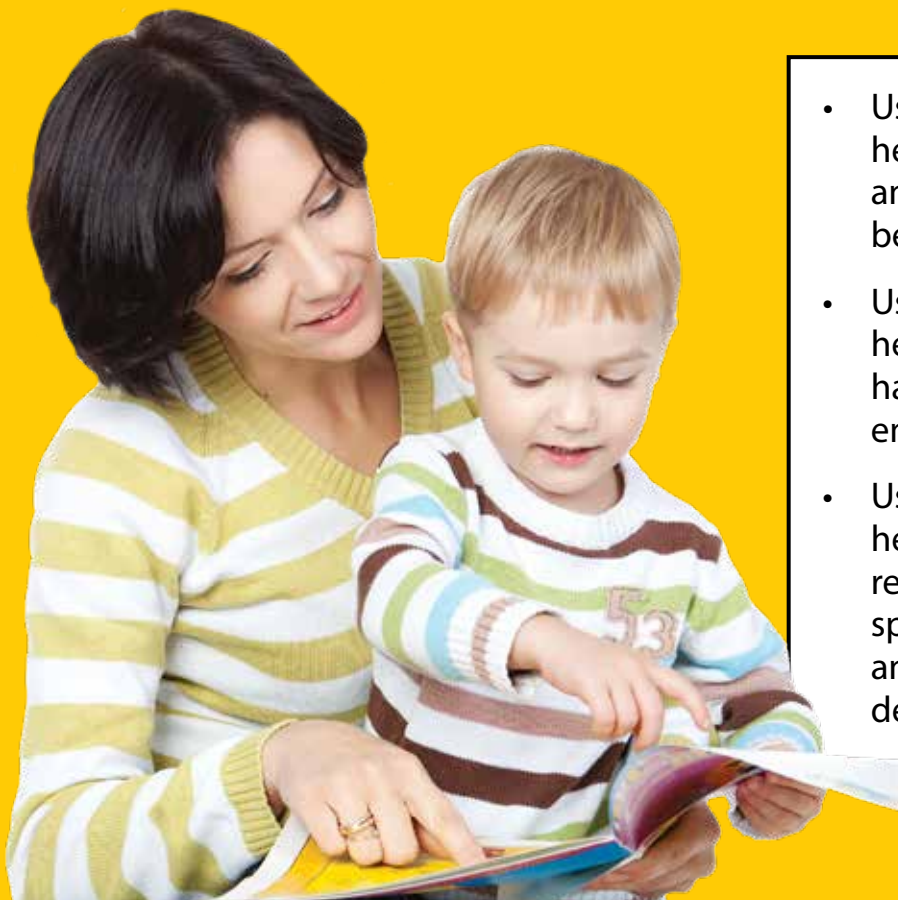


### Positive Discipline helps your child to:

- Make good choices
- Get along with others
- Treat others with respect
- Learn to solve problems
- Be confident
- Develop self control
- Know the consequences of his or her actions

### Positive Discipline does NOT:

- Frighten
- Hurt
- Criticize
- Shame
- Cause guilt
- Break trust
- Reject
- Force children to obey



- Using positive discipline will help to improve communication and create a strong relationship between you and your children
- Using positive discipline will help your children become happy, responsible, caring, and emotionally mature
- Using positive discipline will help build a lifelong positive relationship with children - spend time together, play and listen to them in order to determine their needs

**The Canadian Paediatric Society suggests that children be disciplined according to their "age, stages of development, and personality."**



# What is Punishment?

Punishment is not discipline.  
Punishment can physically or emotionally hurt a child.



## Examples of physical and emotional punishment that are NOT acceptable:

- name calling
- hitting
- swearing
- pushing
- spanking
- teasing
- yelling
- slapping
- verbal put downs

Durrant, J.E., Ensom, R., and Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth (2004).

Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth. Ottawa: Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth.

## Parents and caregivers use punishment because they:

- Believe punishment is a good way to teach children a lesson
- Are angry and they take their anger out on their children
- Are unaware of their children's stage of development, personality and needs
- Feel it is a quick way to gain control and change their children's behaviour
- Repeat what they learned as children



## Reasons NOT to use punishment

- It is easy to hurt a child when acting in anger
- The child may think it is okay to solve problems with violence
- The child may feel humiliated and frightened
- The child will not understand what behaviour is expected
- Use of punishment will hurt the relationship between parent and child

**Feelings of anger can affect your relationship with your child and can even interfere with your judgment. Don't hold your anger in, learn to deal with it.**

### Signs of anger

- Red face
- Rapid breathing
- Tense body
- Clenched teeth, hands or toes
- Feeling stressed
- Agitation
- Frustration
- Head hurts

### Tips for controlling anger

- Walk away
- Breathe
- Count to 10 or more
- Write your feelings down
- Talk to someone
- Use humour

**Research shows that physical punishment increases the likelihood that children will grow up with problems associated with low self-esteem, aggressive behaviour, depression and mental illness.**

Invest In Kids (2005) Coping: How Do I Control My Anger? Retrieved March 13, 2006, From [http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=parents\\_anger](http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=parents_anger)

Thomas, Eleanor. (2004) Aggressive behaviour outcomes for young children: change in parenting environment predicts change in behaviour. Statistics Canada and Social Development.



# Spanking

**Spanking, like other forms of physical punishment, will not teach children what to do the next time they are frustrated, angry or upset.**

## Spanking may cause:

- physical and emotional harm
- parents and caregivers to lose confidence in their ability to effectively discipline
- your child to learn that it is okay to solve problems by hitting
- your child to fear you
- your child to feel angry, powerless, and scared
- damage to your child's self-esteem
- damage to your child's trust in you and she may avoid coming to you when there is a problem
- depression, behavioural and emotional problems



## Common Truths

- Parents who think that mild spankings are okay increase the likelihood that they might hit their children too hard when frustrated or very angry
- Even mild physical punishment can cause serious injury
- Children who are spanked may think that it is okay to get their own way by using violence
- Spanking does not teach children right from wrong
- Choosing not to spank does not mean that you are letting your children do anything they please
- In the past, parents did the best with what they knew, but you know more
- It was the positive experiences while growing up that helped you to turn out fine

## Common Myths

- "I only use mild spankings so I don't really hurt my kid"
- "Spanking is good for kids"
- "If I don't spank my kid, then he won't listen and learn"
- "I was spanked and I turned out fine"

**Most parents and caregivers don't want to spank their child. Often parents and caregivers can only think of one thing to do when their child misbehaves. The good news is there are many ways to respond to your child's behaviour. Parents who begin to use different strategies for discipline, will find that these work better than spanking.**

**Read on for ideas about Positive Discipline.**



# Positive Discipline for Infants 0-12 months

**Infants are too young to know right from wrong. It is your job to comfort, teach and guide infants to help them adjust to the world around them.**



## Developmental Awareness

### Infants may:

- Smile, use gestures, and babble in response to parent or caregiver
- Be wary of strangers at approximately 6-8 months
- Mouth toys and hands to learn about their environment
- Use hands to explore by pulling, poking, reaching, grasping
- Start to physically explore their surroundings by rolling, crawling, walking
- Start to develop eating and sleeping habits

### What You Might Expect

#### Crying

### What Your Infant May be Trying to Tell You

"Crying is my only way to tell you when I am hungry tired, hurt, hot/cold, upset or sick. You will get to know my cries."  
"The way you respond to me tells me how you feel about me."

#### Mouthing and reaching

"The world and everything in it is very new to me. I use my mouth and hands to explore toys, faces, and anything I can reach to learn about my environment."  
"Please keep my world safe as I don't know what is harmful to me."

#### Upset when parent or caregiver leaves

"I love you and this is my way of telling you." "Please reassure me that you are coming back and don't make goodbyes too long and drawn out. I will calm down and will be happy to see you when you get back."

#### Starting to move

"I am starting to crawl and move around. I am very quick and curious; I seem to get into everything!"  
"Please keep my world safe, watch me carefully and allow me to explore."

## Planning for Positive Discipline

### Baby-proof your home

Always be concerned about safety. Keep valuables, breakables and chemicals away from infants so they can safely explore their environments. For example, obtain cupboard locks for chemicals and other hazards.

### Establish Routines

Infants tell time by routines not by the clock. Try to keep your infant's routine as consistent as possible. Make routines for the day so your baby will get used to doing things at certain times.

### Respond to your infant's needs

During the first year infants are learning to trust their parents and caregivers. You can't spoil a baby by picking him up when he cries. Your baby develops a growing trust if you feed her, care for her, respond to her needs and love her.

### Build a positive relationship

Spend quiet time reading, singing, or talking to your infant every day. Imitate his or her sounds and facial expressions. Play with your baby using all senses (see, touch, hear, smell and taste) to help her learn.



## What to do when...

### Your infant is doing something you don't want her to do

Use a nurturing touch to redirect your infant away from danger. Verbal direction includes using simple words or gestures to redirect her attention.

### Your infant is playing with something he shouldn't

Interest your infant in something else. If he is playing with a dangerous object, substitute it with a safe toy.

### Your infant is crying

Respond to your infant's cry by checking to see if he is wet, safe, hungry or hot or cold. Hold and cuddle your baby to show him that you are there when he needs you. Some babies cry more than others and this can be overwhelming.

### Remember, it's okay to ask for help.

## Remember...

Never shake a baby! Shaking a baby can result in neck whiplash, back and other bone injuries, paralysis, permanent brain damage and sometimes death.

**Nobody's Perfect ...** Positive Discipline takes time, patience and consistency, but our children are worth it!



# Positive Discipline for Toddlers 1-3 years

The key to disciplining your toddler involves understanding and quick thinking.

## Developmental Awareness

### Toddlers may:

- Insist on being independent as their skills develop
- Begin to say "NO" and "MINE"
- Only be able to think of themselves and see things from their own point of view
- Copy actions of others
- Have a short attention span
- Be eager to explore everything and don't want to hold your hand or ride in the stroller



### What You Might Expect

### What Your Toddler May be Trying to Tell You

#### Busy

"I have lots of energy and I am growing. I am learning to walk, run, climb, throw and feed myself. I sometimes act without thinking. It's your job to teach me about safety, manners and feelings."

#### Curious

"I want to explore everything in my environment and test how people will respond to my behaviour."

#### Easily Frustrated

"I have a limited number of words and can't always do what I think I can." "I cannot always tell you what is wrong and I may whine, cry, bite or throw myself on the ground."

#### Biting

"I may not be able to tell you what I want - my teeth hurt and biting feels good." "I am angry because I can't get your attention or get my way."

#### Tantrums

"Sometimes I may build up to have a temper tantrum. It's your job to keep me safe and to help me calm down."

#### Independent

"I want to do things by myself." "It's your job to be patient and allow enough time for me to practice everyday tasks such as getting dressed or feeding myself to help me to be successful."

## Planning for Positive Discipline

### Set up a safe environment

A safe place to play and appropriate toys to play with will save you from saying "NO" and can make your job as a parent much easier.

### Establish a routine

Toddlers need reasonable naps and bedtimes and can act out when tired or hungry. They need regular, healthy snacks and meals. Growing bodies need time to run, jump and play everyday. Taking care of basic needs can go a long way.

### Catch your toddler doing something good

Let your toddler know you're pleased when he behaves well.

### Be realistic about your expectations

Remember, your child may not have the ability to do what you ask of them. For example, asking your 3 year old to clean her bedroom may be an unrealistic expectation.

### Try to understand your toddler's behaviours

If your toddler is biting or having tantrums, is there a pattern to the behaviour? Do they bite you when you don't pay attention to them? Does he have a tantrum every day before dinner? These patterns may help you to understand why and prevent the behaviour in the future.

### Build a positive relationship

Spend time with your toddler and have fun together. If you promise something to your toddler, follow through. Respect your toddler's feelings and apologize when you are wrong.

## What to do when...

### Your toddler is doing something you don't want them to do

Toddlers have short attention spans. Distract your toddler by calling attention to another activity or toy. Or, you can model for your toddler what he should be doing.

### Your toddler is biting

Safely stop the behaviour and state "no biting". Offer safe teething choices such as a teething ring. Model a better way to interact.

### Your toddler is having a temper tantrum

Remain calm. Don't worry about what others are thinking. You can make sure they are safe and let them tantrum. Or, you can pick your toddler up and gently move them to a safe place. When they are calm, offer comfort and talk to them about what they can do next time.

## Remember...

Your toddler learns by watching everything you do and say. Being a good role model is key to positive discipline.

**Nobody's Perfect ...** Positive Discipline is not the only part of being a parent and caregiver. Try spending time with your child just having fun, playing together, reading together and modeling good behaviour.



# Positive Discipline for Preschoolers 3-5 years

You will need a lot of patience as you guide and teach your preschooler to follow rules and get along with others.

## Developmental Awareness

Preschoolers may:

- Be able to do more for themselves and by themselves
- Take turns and share with friends
- Be able to follow directions and routines
- Speak in sentences and ask lots of questions
- Play with small toys, print, colour and cut
- Be more coordinated and be able to run, jump and ride a tricycle



### What You Might Expect

### What Your Preschooler May be Trying to Tell You

#### Emotional

"I am developing an awareness of my feelings. I may be happy one minute, sad or angry the next. This is normal." "I am trying out new things and anger is one of them."

#### Energetic

"I have lots of energy that I want to use to explore the world around me." "I am developing my skills and abilities; I want to jump, run, climb and skip."

#### Talkative

"I want to know why, so please be patient with me when I ask lots of questions." "Sometimes I may say silly things and use 'bad' words."

#### Independent

"I want to do more on my own. I am not a toddler anymore." "I can tell you what I want and I can do more for myself."

#### Social

"Being with friends is important to me and I am learning to share with others."

#### Imaginative

"I like to dress up and play pretend since it provides me with a chance to work out my fears and fantasies." "I can tell stories and will use my imagination to make an empty box into something fun."

## Planning for Positive Discipline

### Make sure the environment is safe

Set clear limits as to where your child can go without supervision. Make sure they can't get into something you don't want them to.

### Plan ahead

If your child has difficulty in specific situations, talk to your child about positive behaviour before he is in that situation.

### Build a positive relationship

Spend time having fun with your preschooler. Have a special time with your child doing something that she has picked. This is a time for you to talk, laugh and have fun while following your child's lead.

### Catch your child doing something good

Talk about your children's accomplishments and good acts. Be specific in your praise so they know what they did well.

### Be a good communicator

Get down to your child's level and make sure you have their attention before speaking. Make sure your instructions are short and clear. Don't offer a choice if there isn't one. Remember, not everything in life is negotiable.

### Offer choices if you can

Giving choices helps develop independence and builds skills. It is important to only offer choices if it is safe for the child to make the decision. If you give them a choice, follow through with what they choose.

### Make sure your discipline matches the behaviour

Positive Discipline means that you respond immediately and use your discipline to teach the child how you want them to behave the next time.

## What to do when...

### Your child is doing something you don't want them to do

Preschoolers have longer attention spans and more language. The first step is to stop the behaviour and then you can talk to your preschooler. Review the rules and tell them what they can do. Model the behaviour that you want to see to help your preschooler understand what is expected of him.

### If the behaviour continues

- remain calm
- state the expected behaviour, try to understand what he is feeling
- state the consequence of not behaving as expected, for example, safely removing the child from the activity, removing the toy or leaving the area.

### If they do it again

You must follow through with the consequence that you stated. It is important that you can do what you say you are going to do and that it can happen quickly.

### Your child uses a "bad" word

"Potty talk" is common at this age. It is important to stay calm and not overreact to this behaviour. If you can, ignore. If you cannot ignore, talk to your child about why "we don't use these words". You can offer other words that they could use. Remember, kids are learning by watching so you have to watch your language too!

### Your child is aggressive with his peers

Preschoolers are having more contact with their peers. When you see your preschooler getting "physical" with his friends, the first step is to stop the behaviour. Then talk to your preschooler about how his friend is feeling. Review the rules and talk about positive ways to play together.

## Remember...

Consequences should teach your preschooler how you want them to behave and should not be physically or emotionally harmful. Positive Discipline for preschoolers involves setting clear rules and consistent expectations as well as being a good role model.





# Positive Discipline for School Age Children 6-12 years

Friends, teachers and media are important to the school aged child. It is your job to ensure communication is open so that you can help guide them to make positive decisions.

## Developmental Awareness

### School Aged Children may:

- Want to spend time away from their family
- Experience peer pressure
- In the later stages, experience body changes as puberty approaches
- Understand right from wrong and the consequences of their actions
- Place more importance on their relationships with friends
- Become self-conscious and private



### What You Might Expect

### What Your School Aged Child May be Trying to Tell You

<b>Controlling</b>	"I like to be the boss and winning is very important to me." "I don't know how to deal with failure."
<b>Questioning</b>	"I am starting to see the differences in my world and I am trying to make sense of them."
<b>Unfocused</b>	"I can't sit and pay attention for too long, especially when I don't like what I'm doing."
<b>Independent</b>	"I want to spend more time with my friends and less time with my family." "My friends are very important to me."
<b>Self-conscious</b>	"I am concerned about how I look. My body is changing and I sometimes feel awkward and embarrassed." "What my friends think about how I look is more important to me than what you think. I want to fit in."
<b>Rebellious</b>	"I am developing an identity separate from my parents so I will talk back, disagree with and challenge you."
<b>Moody</b>	"My changing body means active hormones." "My emotions are up and down and my feelings can be easily hurt." "Life is stressful because of school, my friends, peer pressure and new rules."

## Planning for Positive Discipline

### Building Positive Relationships

Spend positive quality time with your child every day. This could be listening to your child or it could be completing an activity that your child enjoys. Provide your child with frequent approval and praise.

### Communicate

Communicate expectations clearly. You may need to repeat instructions and rules more than once. Offering a simple explanation may help your child understand and accept your decisions. Avoid lengthy lectures as your child will tune you out.

### Be the Parent

You are the parent and you can't guide and teach your child if you are trying to be his friend. You still need to consistently supervise, set rules and follow through with what you have said you are going to do.

### Model, Model, Model!

Good behaviour starts with parents being a good role model. Being a good role model means demonstrating:

- how to problem solve
- caring for others
- making good decisions everyday
- finding positive ways of dealing with your anger

## What to do when...

### Your child is doing something you don't want him to do - Problem Solve Together by:

- staying calm
- talking with your child not at him
- listening
- helping your child handle the situation
- discussing what can be done differently next time
- negotiating when you can to make children part of the process

### Your child says that you are the meanest parent in the world

This is normal. Being a parent is a tough job and means that your child is not always going to like your decisions. Stay calm, follow-through with what you said you were going to do, and remember that your child still loves you.

### You've explained your decision, but your child continues to demand her way

Keep your cool and try to distance yourself from the interaction. This may include asking someone else to help or after making sure your child is safe, finding a quiet place for yourself to take a short break. Sometimes, you may be able to negotiate a compromise. Avoid comments like "because I said so" to help reduce power struggles.



## Remember...

The school age years are a time of great change. It is a time for limits, consistent follow through, patience, negotiation, and compromise. Teaching your child by talking through problems will help them become independent.



# Positive Discipline for Teens 13-18 years

The only thing more difficult than being a teenager may be parenting one! The teenage years are about establishing personal identity and independence. This is a time for parents to gradually help teenagers take responsibility for themselves.

## Developmental Awareness

Teenagers may:

- Spend less time with parents and family
- Begin to establish their identity
- Discover and understand sexuality
- Have an increased awareness of their body and their appearance
- Be strongly influenced by media, trends, and peers
- Be self-absorbed and live "in the moment"
- Make decisions that adults do not always understand



### What You Might Expect

#### Defiance

"I don't want you to tell me what to do, I want to make my own decisions."  
"I want to feel in control of the situation."

#### Opinionated

"I am learning to think on my own and I want to have my say."  
"I need to be heard so I feel that my opinions and ideas count."

#### Independent

"I want to spend time with my friends and do what everyone else is doing."  
"I want to have freedom and I want to be trusted."

#### Rebellious

"I don't care what anyone thinks, I will do what I want."  
"I am challenging the rules because I am trying out new ideas and possibilities."

#### Insecurity

"As a teenager, I may act the way I do because I am feeling unsure of myself."  
"I want to do what everyone else is doing, but I am not sure I am ready."  
"I am self-conscious, I feel like everyone is looking at me."  
"I am trying to fit in and I want to be accepted by my friends."

## Planning for Positive Discipline

### Build a Positive Relationship

Take an interest in your teen's activities and spend time together doing something they enjoy. Daily activities such as mealtimes, shopping, walks, and watching tv are opportunities to connect with your teen.

### Encourage Independence and Responsibility

Create opportunities for your teen to demonstrate responsibility and for you to acknowledge their effort.

### Communicate

Listen and respect your teen. Avoid being judgmental and imposing your values. Listen to their ideas, beliefs and values. How you react to your teen may influence if they come to you the next time.

### Establish Rules Together

Negotiate expectations and rules together to make your teen feel part of the process. Teens need independence and want to feel trusted but they still need you to teach and guide them. If helpful, put the rules in writing; make a contract that lays out rules, expectations and consequences.

### Be Aware of Your Teenager's Whereabouts

Even though teens want to spend time with their friends, it is important that you know where they are, what they are doing, and who they are with.

## What to do when...

### Your teen is doing something that you don't want them to do

Problem solve together by:

- Staying calm
- Listening before jumping in and reacting
- Allowing time for your teen and yourself to both state your feelings
- Discussing what can be done differently the next time
- Negotiating when you can, to make your teen a part of the process

### The rules are broken

As difficult as it is, try not to lose your cool. If you do, your teen will certainly lose his. When rules are broken there needs to be some consequence but this has to be carefully thought out. Listen first to what your teen has to say. Make consequences that fit the rules that were broken. For example, if a teen breaks curfew, he will have to come home earlier the next time. Only make consequences that you can follow through with. It is important to give your teen a chance to try again after a mistake.

### What to do when your teen makes decisions that are unsafe

Keep the lines of communication open when talking about sexuality, drugs, alcohol, etc. There are many topics that can be emotionally charged and can stop parents from listening. Make a conscious effort to control your feelings and listen.



## Remember...

Discipline is still an important part of parenting a teen. They still need positive discipline to feel secure and safe while learning how to get along with others and to live in society. Positive discipline leads to young people learning self-discipline.

