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.

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.”

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

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.