

of getting caught. With logical consequences, good behavior results when the child sees that things will work better when he follows the rules.

If you find yourself constantly reminding, nagging at, yelling at, or spanking your child, decide whether these methods or natural consequences might be better in the long run. Most child development specialists recommend natural or logical consequences as successful methods for teaching self-discipline.



Change is hard for families to accept, though. Your children may try to “test” your new approach to guiding their behavior. They might actually misbehave *more* for a short time until they realize you are committed to this new way of handling problems. Take your time and don't give up when things don't get better right away. In time they will. Remember, allowing natural consequences doesn't force obedience. It encourages your child to make responsible decisions and to solve problems in positive ways.

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CHFD-E 19-02

August 2001

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Natural Consequences



The University of Georgia

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Natural Consequences

Wouldn't it be great if you never had to punish your child? Many parents dream of having a child who behaves well *simply because he wants to!*

That type of discipline *does exist*. It's called *self-discipline*. Whenever one person punishes another, problems can erupt. But if a person



feels responsible for his own behavior, he is willing to take the consequences (good or bad).

“Natural consequences” is another way to describe the results of what happens when no one else is around. For example:

- If you play outside on a cold day without your jacket, you get cold.
- If you go barefoot and step on a rock, you get hurt.

- If you spend all of your allowance in one day, there is none left for the rest of the week.

We all learn from natural consequences. Parents don't need to yell at children to wear coats on cold days; when they get cold, they'll know to dress warmly. Wearing clothes raked out from underneath the bed will usually cure a fussy child from forgetting to carry dirty clothes to the washer. This is self-discipline. By using natural consequences, your child will soon realize that for every action there are consequences.

Natural consequences do not apply in all situations.

Sometimes they are too dangerous. For example, if your child plays in the road, he could get run over. Other times, there are no natural consequences that will apply.

In these cases, parents should come up with logical consequences. Like natural consequences, logical consequences must fit the misbehavior. For example:

When Roy comes to the dinner table with dirty hands, Dad calmly says, “Roy, we don't eat with dirty hands. Would you like to wash up with soap or not eat?”

Roy has a choice, washing or not eating. He might choose not to eat, which Dad should allow. After all, that was the choice Roy was given.

If Roy doesn't eat and comes to Dad later with a grumbling stomach, he has to face the logical consequence. Dad can say, “Roy, you chose not to eat with the family. We will eat again at breakfast.”

What Can You Do?

When you use logical and natural consequences, keep these tips in mind:

- Remain calm.
- Offer only those choices or consequences that you as a parent are willing to accept and enforce.



- Make sure the consequence is related to the problem. Punishment that does not fit may only make the child angry instead of teaching him something.
- Be consistent.
- Don't worry too much about what others think.

Logical and natural consequences are not a new way to punish a child.

They are ways for the child to learn self-discipline. When a parent punishes a child, the message conveyed is, “You had better do what I say or else.” Punishment often leads to proper behavior only when the child is afraid