



What's So Positive About Positive Discipline? ... and Other Mysteries of Child Guidance



What's In This Kit?

This training kit introduces the hallmarks of positive discipline and helps teachers identify ways to develop the skills to implement the hallmarks in their classrooms. It is designed to expand teachers' abilities to guide children positively. It contains:

- Expected training outcomes
- Preparation instructions
- Training strategies and tips
- Implementation steps
- Follow-up activities for teachers
- Follow-up activities for administrators/directors
- A learning assessment
- A training evaluation/further needs assessment
- A resource list
- The article "What's So Positive About Positive Discipline" by Karen Stephens
- A training certificate to award to teachers for attendance and participation
- A certificate for the trainer and other presenters



Who's the Target Audience?

The target audience for this kit is intermediate and advanced teachers working with children from birth to age 8.

Teacher Skill Level



Children's Age Level





Kit Timeline:

Preparation time for this kit is from 1.0-3.0 hours. Implementation time is estimated at 1.5 hours.



Training Outcomes:

1. Teachers will understand the concept of positive discipline.
2. Teachers will formulate specific ideas for applying positive discipline to the classroom by:
 - a. becoming a reliable, ethical role model
 - b. basing expectations of behavior on knowledge of child development as well as knowledge of individual children
 - c. respectfully and completely explaining rules to children and families on a routine basis
 - d. identifying reasonable, related, and respectful consequences
 - e. understanding and analyzing the underlying causes and motivation for inappropriate behavior
 - f. identifying behaviors that might require further intervention by helping professionals
 - g. focusing on preventing problem situations
 - h. giving attention and encouragement to children for meeting classroom expectations as well as for typical behavior
 - i. focusing on what children can do instead of on what they can't or shouldn't do
 - j. giving children many age-appropriate choices
 - k. identifying and discussing feelings openly
 - l. coaching children in using more sophisticated social problem-solving skills including sharing, trading, dividing resources, compromising, negotiating, strategizing
 - m. avoiding labeling children
 - n. channeling excess energy into more appropriate and constructive pursuits

These training outcomes address the following:

- 1.B, 3.B.04-08, C, E, and F of the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Performance Criteria (2005), www.naeyc.org.
- 1 and 4b of NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation, Initial Licensure Level (2003), www.naeyc.org.
- Standard 1304.52(h)(1)(iv) of Head Start Performance Standards (Federal Register, Nov. 5, 1996, Volume 61, Number 215), www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/.
- D11, F1, and F2 of the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, National Association of Child Care Professionals (2005), www.naccp.org.

You may want to take the time now to locate additional state and local standards that relate to this topic or requirements of other regulatory bodies specific to your program. Add those to this plan to personalize it.



Preparation:

1. Read the article “What’s So Positive About Positive Discipline?” by Karen Stephens. Locate and read any of the following resources to supplement your understanding of positive discipline:
Nelson, J. (1996). *Positive Discipline*. New York: Ballantine Books.
Stephens, K. Clear Expectations Help Children Behave. *Parenting Exchange*, (Item #5226001) — included in this training kit.
2. Read the training kit to familiarize yourself with the implementation steps, handouts, etc.
3. Duplicate and distribute the article “What’s So Positive About Positive Discipline?” to teachers to read prior to the training session.
4. Duplicate Handout 1: *Hallmarks of Positive Discipline*.
5. Spend some time observing in classrooms, collecting evidence of teachers and children in action demonstrating the hallmarks of positive discipline. Take notes about situations that represent the hallmarks so that you can recreate the situations you observed later. Focus your observations on those areas where teachers are demonstrating positive guidance skills already. Take a camera (35 mm, digital, or video) along to see if there are things that can be documented on film as well as by observation. The goal of these observations is to document what teachers are already doing that is compatible with positive guidance — not to identify what they are not doing.
6. Collect the supplies and materials needed for the training session, including flip chart paper and markers.
7. Duplicate the certificate of attendance and participation.



Training Strategy:

- Visualization
- Group discussion

Training Tip: Pair/Share — This training strategy is designed to pair participants with a partner who is sitting near them. As they discuss the question posed to the larger group, a change occurs from thinking about the question or idea to talking about and sharing ideas. This approach gives everyone an opportunity to participate without taking the time to get each person's thoughts or ideas articulated to the larger group.



Implementation:

1. Introduce the objectives of the training session by defining positive discipline as guidance or discipline that is both constructive and instructive.
2. Ask teachers to visualize their dreams for children in their classroom by closing their eyes and thinking about one child for whom they have wonderful, positive dreams. Ask each teacher to visualize the child as an adult and to describe the characteristics of the child as she sees him or her as an adult. Pair-share visualizations with a teaching peer.
3. Select two or three teachers to share their dreams with the large group.
4. Next, ask teachers to visualize the lasting impressions and impact their teaching has had on the child they selected. Ask one or two different teachers to share the ways they feel that they have impacted the child they selected.
5. Now, ask teachers to repeat the visualization activity on a child in their classroom who is presenting one of the “behavior challenges” that Stephens identified.
6. Repeat the pair-sharing. Then ask one or two teachers to share their visualization. Facilitate a discussion about how the visions for the two children are similar and different.
7. On two pages of flip chart paper, write the words “discipline” and “punishment.” Then give each teacher a marker to add the words they associate with each word.
8. Facilitate a discussion about the differences between discipline and punishment and how they are differentially implemented in the classroom. Take this opportunity to clarify the school’s position on discipline and punishment and the associated teaching behaviors to use and avoid.
9. Once teachers are clear about the differences between guidance, discipline, and punishment, show teachers your documentation of their positive guidance and discipline skills — either by showing the video tape with your commentary or sharing the observations you made of positive discipline at work in the classroom. You may want to pick just one or two to begin with but don’t hesitate to come back and use additional examples as needed.
10. Give teachers Handout 1: *Hallmarks of Positive Discipline*. Break teachers into small groups to identify and discuss one hallmark that any observer would readily see while observing their classrooms and one that would be harder to observe.
11. Facilitate a summary discussion of next steps that teachers feel they might need to take to demonstrate more hallmarks in their classrooms.
12. Conclude the session by having each teacher make a plan for implementing the identified hallmarks.



Follow-up Activities for Teachers:

1. Continue to add to the documentation of positive guidance strategies through regular observation. Use the information or media you collect to validate individual teachers' growing skills in positive discipline during teacher conferences, at future staff meetings or training sessions, or at parent meetings.
2. Appoint a task force of teachers to create a positive discipline teacher evaluation using the hallmarks of positive discipline as a foundation. Charge teachers with operationalizing the hallmarks into objective evaluative criteria that guide teachers to improve their positive discipline skills over time. For example, for the first hallmark, teachers serve as reliable, ethical role models, the teachers might create such criteria as: follows the same rules that children are asked to follow, or sits on the floor or in chairs and not on furniture.



Follow-up Activities for Administrators/Directors:

1. Integrate the positive discipline evaluation into your teacher evaluation system.



Learning Assessment

Ask teachers to complete the learning assessment to validate their understanding of the topic.



Training Evaluation / Further Needs Assessment:

1. Ask teachers to complete the training evaluation.
2. Use the responses to identify further training needs.
3. Complete the positive discipline teacher evaluation on each classroom teacher to identify areas for further training. Discuss your observations with each teacher.



What's Next?

If the training evaluation and further needs assessment indicates that your staff needs further training in positive guidance, take a look at "Hard Joys: Managing Behavior with a Creative Mind and a Playful Spirit" (Out of the Box Training Kit #4400907).



Resources:

Nelson, J. (1996). *Positive Discipline*. New York: Ballantine Books.
Stephens, K. Clear Expectations Help Children Behave. *Parenting Exchange*, (Item #5226001) — included in this training kit.

Handout 1:

Hallmarks of Positive Discipline

- Teachers serve as reliable, ethical role models. By example, teachers illustrate appropriate behavior.
- Teachers consider the constant interplay between emotional, social, and intellectual development as it impacts children’s behavior.
- Reasons for rules and expectations are respectfully explained on a routine basis so children understand the purpose of compliance.
- Consequences of appropriate as well as inappropriate behavior are simply explained and enforced according to children’s developmental reasoning abilities. At all times, consequences are reasonable, respectful, and related to the deed.
- After inappropriate behavior is addressed, caregivers express trust and confidence in a child’s ability to control behavior or comply with expectations more effectively in the future.
- Teachers adapt daily schedules, classroom activities, and child guidance techniques to children’s individual temperament. Caregivers use a variety of options when guiding children of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- When addressing behavior, teachers try to understand and analyze the underlying cause and/or motivation for inappropriate behavior.
- The focus is on preventing situations that may lead to behavior problems, rather than on punishment and shame.
- Children are given attention and encouragement for meeting classroom expectations as well as for being just who they are — capable individuals.
- Children experience liberal amounts of specific encouragement, reflective listening, and guidance on a daily basis.
- Teachers focus on what children can do, rather than on what they can’t do.
- Children are given choices and are allowed to make age-appropriate decisions. Choice is built into the daily curriculum.
- Feelings of children and teachers are openly and regularly discussed.
- Teachers coach children as they learn to make decisions and control their behavior. They encourage the development of social skills such as sharing, trading, negotiating, communicating, compromising, strategizing, and problem solving.
- Children participate in creating classroom expectations and rules.
- Parents are kept abreast of their child’s social development. Family comments and suggestions are respectfully solicited, considered, and shared with other teaching staff.
- Children are given a fresh start each day (or more often when necessary). Staff focus on children’s positive characteristics more than perceived negative traits.
- Teachers channel excess energy, or inappropriate behavior, into more constructive pursuits.

Learning Assessment

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1. Conduct short (2-10 minute) observations of teachers who participated in the workshop. Look for teachers using examples of positive discipline in their classrooms.

2. Use the training outcome objectives to organize your notes and observations. For example, observe for teachers being a role model for children, then for examples of giving children appropriate choices, and so forth.

3. Use your collection of observations to repeat the training session for new staff or to update experienced staff's skills.

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What's So Positive about Positive Discipline? . . . and Other Mysteries of Child Guidance

by Karen Stephens

Picture it. You've planned a staff beannie-weenie, chip 'n cheese party (translation: child care directors' econo-class alternative to the more upscale office cocktail party). We directors plan these parties to promote staff unity, employer loyalty, and other such lofty goals . . . we hope these get-togethers prevent staff burnout (or should I say blow up?).

Some directors taboo *shop talk* at beannie-weenie, chip 'n cheese parties . . . but admit it, who are we kidding? Try as we might to create a *non-work atmosphere*, the staff will end up shop talking into the wee hours of the morning. Yes, slowly but surely (meaning after all the food has been inhaled), the discussion will focus on one or two choice children from each classroom. You know the ones . . . the *behaviorally challenging children*. Nothing unites a staff like commiserating over discipline problems! (So rest easy, one of your party goals has been achieved!)

As your mind swims in anecdotes of children's audacious, reprehensible, and repugnant behavior, you find yourself wondering why we adults always think of children as being behaviorally challenging rather than ourselves. Before you know it, something close to heresy slips from your lips. In a barely audible voice, you timidly ask: "Have you thought that maybe we should . . . uh . . . well maybe . . . uh try some more positive discipline techniques and then maybe the children will behave better?"

Now you've done it! You've fractured the evening's vigilante ambiance by suggesting the staff assess their own behavior as well as the children's. As if you have suggested mutiny, the staff indignantly defend

themselves. "We do use positive discipline. We positively use time out each and every day." You venture to say that's not what you mean by positive discipline. Uh oh, you've opened the proverbial can of worms. But bravo! You've just identified your next staff development topic; there's lots to cover.

The phrase *positive discipline* is thrown around very loosely these days (along with its contemporary cousin *developmentally appropriate practice*). Those who parent, teach, and care for children crave a child guidance system that guarantees to be always pleasant and fun. They want a discipline guru to tell them how to get children to comply instantly and cheerfully with their every wish (and command?). News flash: There is no such discipline technique! But there are child guidance strategies that are CONSTRUCTIVE AND INSTRUCTIVE. Discipline does not have to be demeaning, degrading, harsh, or otherwise debilitating to the child and caregiver. Following are ideas for putting the *positive* into positive discipline.

Goals of Positive Discipline

All of us have dreams for children. If you were to tell me your dreams, I expect they would be similar to those I have heard from hundreds of early childhood professionals and parents. We want them to like themselves as they mature into adulthood; we want them to have a positive self-esteem. We dream our children will be secure and self-confident. Twenty years in the future we picture them being bold, courageous, and persistent when undertaking new challenges; we see them unafraid of taking risks or

making mistakes. We pray they will become independent and able to make wise decisions . . . and yet still turn to us for advice once in a while. We hope they will exert self-control when tempted by dangerous and destructive behaviors. Caring, compassionate, respectful, responsible, sensitive, and gentle are words that frequent our dreams for children.

All of these dreams represent the best in us as we work to nurture young children's development. How we discipline children when they are at their most vulnerable, which is during their early childhood years, has tremendous impact on whether our dreams will come true.

From experience, we all know teachers and caregivers leave lasting impressions on their *students*. A teacher can uplift a child's spirit — the fragile self-esteem — or dash it with contempt and insensitivity. Teachers have the power to praise or humiliate, empower or intimidate, support or undermine. Indeed, teachers can make children's time in their classroom the essence of heaven or hell. Quite an awesome power. For our children's sake, early childhood professionals must use this power wisely.

Hallmarks of Positive Discipline

- Teachers serve as reliable, ethical role models. By example, teachers illustrate appropriate behavior. "Do as I say, not as I do" DOES NOT work with young children.
- Teachers consider the constant interplay between emotional, social, and intellectual development as it impacts children's behavior. Expectations for behavior are based on teachers' knowledge of general child development, AS WELL AS individual children's abilities and background. (Expecting too much results in frustration. Expecting too little leads to boredom. Both set the stage for behavior problems!)
- Reasons for rules and expectations are RESPECTFULLY explained on a routine basis so children understand the purpose of compliance.
- Consequences for appropriate as well as inappropriate behavior are simply explained and enforced according to children's developmental reasoning ability. At all times consequences are reasonable, respectful, and related to the deed. For instance, when a child spills milk, a napkin may be matter of factly handed to the child so he can be responsible for

cleaning his own spill. This is much more respectful than saying, "How many times have I told you to be careful with your milk? Now you can't have any more." (To explore consequences, see **Positive Discipline** by Jane Nelsen, Ballantine Books, 1981.)

- After inappropriate behavior is addressed, caregivers express TRUST AND CONFIDENCE in a child's ability to control behavior or comply with expectations more effectively in the future.
- Teachers adapt daily schedule, classroom activities, and child guidance techniques to children's INDIVIDUAL TEMPERAMENT. Caregivers use a variety of options when guiding children of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- When addressing behavior challenges, teachers try to understand and analyze the underlying cause and/or motivation for inappropriate behavior. Causes for troublesome behavior may include stress related to illness, poor nutrition, lack of sleep, erratic schedule, inconsistency in caregivers, or family dysfunction.

Behaviors which may indicate stress or crisis include excessive verbal or physical aggression, obstinance, withdrawal from activities, whining or clinging, masturbation, and other types of attention-getting behaviors. Remember, eliminating the cause for inappropriate behavior is always better than merely treating the symptom! Investigating reasons for children's behavior requires teachers to shift from being disciplinarians to advocates for children's well-being — a worthy (and dare I say noble?) role for early childhood professionals.

- Focus is on PREVENTING situations that may lead to behavior problems, rather than on punishment and shame. This requires having plentiful play materials so children can share more easily. Duplicates of toys are especially important for toddlers through twos. This limits the number of power struggles over "getting my fair share." (Ownership confrontations will never be completely eliminated, nor should they be. Learning to deal with inevitable conflict is an important life skill!)

Play materials should be selected so children EXPERIENCE SUCCESS much more often than frustration and defeat. Toys should match the age and abilities of all children. Wise teachers role model proper use of toys to prevent destructive handling.

Low teacher to child ratios prevent behavior problems. Low ratios ensure that children receive positive individual and small group attention on a regular basis.

- Children are given attention and encouragement for meeting classroom expectations AS WELL AS for being just who they are — fantastic, lovable, and capable individuals. If children don't get attention for behaving appropriately, they WILL get it by acting inappropriately . . . they want any kind of attention they can get . . . positive attention is better for self-image.

- Children experience liberal amounts of SPECIFIC praise, encouragement, and guidance on a daily basis. "What a good boy" is a very vague and general statement. Specific praise identifies the behavior that is valued, i.e., "Thanks for helping set the snack table, Johnny. That was very kind and cooperative of you." In this way you reinforce pro-social behaviors.

- Teachers focus on what children CAN do, rather than on what they can't do. ("You may walk inside," instead of "Don't run!" "I would like to hear your quiet voice," rather than screeching, "Stop yelling!") This not only helps children; it helps teachers feel less like *police officers* or *nags*.

- Children are given choices and allowed to make AGE APPROPRIATE decisions. Building daily choices into the curriculum allows children an appropriate degree of control over their own behavior. This practice shows respect and encourages independence. When children are given options to choose from, they are much more likely to cooperate with expectations. What is a developmentally appropriate choice? Here's a simple one: "It's time to pick up. Which will you put away today, the red blocks or the blue blocks?"

- Feelings of children AND teachers are openly and regularly discussed. Teachers share their emotions non-judgmentally using "I messages": "Joyce, I'm frustrated when you crawl around during group time because the other children can't concentrate on the story." Straightforward comments such as these address behavior without name calling the child. These statements usually bring the child's attention back to the story without building up resentment toward the teacher. It's a great alternative to: "Joyce, can't you ever sit still and listen? Keep it up and you'll leave the group."

As children develop language skills, they are reminded daily to "Use your words to tell people how you feel." This encourages children to CONSTRUCTIVELY ventilate hard-to-handle emotions, such as frustration, anger, jealousy, and fear. It is so rewarding to hear a two year old tell another: "I'm mad you took my car!" (And, yes, twos can do it — and what a great way to limit biting!)

- Teachers subtly *coach* children as they learn to make decisions and control their behavior. Rather than separating fighting children in time out chairs at the first sign of conflict, teachers kneel to eye level and help children talk out problems with each other. They encourage development of social skills such as sharing, trading, negotiating, communicating, compromising, strategizing, and problem solving.

One of the drawbacks of using a time out chair as your ONLY discipline strategy is that it interrupts the process through which children learn to live cooperatively with other people. Social skills are not mastered while sitting on the sidelines! Children AND teachers need to be active players in the process. (And, yes, it is a long road until positive social skills are well developed. To explore conflict resolution, see the **Beginnings** articles in the March/April 1992 issue of **Exchange**.)

- Children participate in creating classroom expectations and rules. When children help set limits, they are more likely to willingly comply with rules. (see Marjorie Kostelnik's article on page 34.)

- Parents are kept abreast of their child's social development on a regular basis. Parent comments and suggestions are respectfully solicited, considered, and shared with all staff. Teachers do this to build consistency between home and school behavior management, NOT to laboriously itemize behavior infractions to parents at the end of each day.

- Children are given a *fresh start* each day (and more often when necessary). Staff focus on children's positive characteristics much more than perceived negative traits. Positive discipline requires staff to refrain from tagging children with uncomplimentary names which label, stereotype, and damage self-esteem.

Some children are labeled without ever being assigned a specific name. Children who hourly find

their way to the time out chair are not-so-subtly labeled the *classroom troublemakers*. Such labels can haunt children for a lifetime. (And who says the dunce chair was only used in an era gone by?)

- Teachers channel excess energy, or inappropriate behavior, into more constructive pursuits whenever possible. Experienced teachers know that small bodies that can't sit still for a book may respond beautifully when allowed to enthusiastically dance the hokey pokey! This discipline technique is often referred to as *redirection* in literature resources.

When dealing with infants through twos, distraction is a handy technique to use in emergencies. If a child is attracted to a potentially dangerous item (such as the fire extinguisher!), caregivers can gently lure the child's attention to a more appropriate alternative, such as a busy board or plastic keys. If these very young children are given too many no's, they become frustrated. Excessive no's convey a negative message — "I don't want you to investigate the environment because I don't trust you." This implies a lack of competence which undermines self-esteem (yes, even in very, very young children).

What Children Learn from Positive Discipline

When used consistently, positive discipline fosters emotional growth as children identify their feelings and express them appropriately. Children learn to stand up for their own rights, while also respecting the rights of others.

Positive discipline helps children develop responsibility and independence as they treat materials with respect and care. Valuable social skills are developed as children learn to problem solve and defuse confrontations. Logical thinking is nurtured as children comprehend rules and reasons for them. When experiencing consequences, children learn about cause and effect. They learn to anticipate and predict events within their control.

When positive discipline is used, caregivers introduce children to the world of relationships with compassion and patience. As a result, children develop social competence. Just as importantly, they learn to trust adults. By being treated with gentleness and high regard, they learn to respect and love themselves. All this is possible when teachers focus

on positive practices. What greater legacy could an early childhood teacher leave?

*Following five and a half cherished years as an early childhood teacher, in 1980 Karen Stephens became director of the Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for ISU home economics department. She consults as a staff and parent trainer on discipline issues and serves as the immediate past president of the Midwest AEYC. She is author of **Block Adventures: Building Creativity and Concepts Through Block Play** (First Teacher Press, 1990).*



by Karen Stephens

Clear Expectations Help Kids Behave

“Behave.” “Be good.” “Cut it out.” “Act your age.” “Straighten up.” “Stop that.” “Keep it up and you’ll get what you’ve got coming.” Do you say these things to kids — over and over and over? Parents often wonder why these reminders and threats have little impact. One reason is that kids don’t always have good short term memory. It’s worse when they’re tired because their brains can’t process short term memory as well as they can when well rested.

Another reason is that it takes practice for children to adjust their behavior to parents’ expectations. Gradually, they must develop the concentration skills and self-discipline needed to obey. That can be hard because their ceaseless curiosity bounces their attention from one thing to another, in spite of what you just said. Often children innocently forget. I don’t believe they intentionally drive us crazy. Well, most of the time anyway

Children also misbehave because we grown ups just don’t communicate clearly enough. Think about it. All of the phrases I used to begin this column are extremely vague. When we say them our tone conveys anger, frustration, or impatience, not clear direction.

To help children behave, parents must first be good role models. It’s common sense not to curse at home if you don’t want your three year old to curse at gram’s!

Children also need verbal guidance. The way you communicate with them should be based on their age and language ability. The younger the child, the more you’ll need to speak with inflection and facial expressions. Your statements need to be shorter and simpler.

Communication is an art of parenting that takes practice. It’s hard to think fast on your feet while on the firing line; but it can be done!

Following are basic tips on clearly communicating expectations to children. Tailor these ideas to your individual family situation as well as to your child’s unique temperament, behavior, and style of interaction.

Be specific about expectations. Focus on what children can do, rather than on what they can’t do. Examples: “Throw the ball outside.” “Climb the tree using both hands.” “Walk inside the house.” “Talk quietly while we’re in the church.” “You may drive your toy cars on the floor.”

Tell children the function of an object. Examples: “The horn is for blowing into. You may not hit your brother with it.” “Crayons are for coloring on paper, not the wall.” “Chairs are for sitting on; you may not use one to climb.” “Blocks are for building, not throwing.” “The table is for our food. Put the cat on the floor.”

Give children reasons for expectations. Examples: “I want you to be safe crossing the street. I expect you to hold onto my hand.” “Use kind words with grandmother so you don’t hurt her feelings.” “When you drive your big wheel

“It’s hard to
think fast
on your feet
while
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firing line.”

into the door, the glass could break. I expect you to ride on the driveway.” “I never want to lose sight of you. Walk right by my leg when we are in the store.” “Other people don’t like to buy food a stranger has touched. Please use only your eyes to admire the fruit.” “Keep your hands by your side when we walk down the dish aisle. If you break a glass I have to pay for it.”

Respectfully share your feelings about behavior. Examples: “I’m scared when you jump off the couch; you could get hurt. You may jump outside.” “I’m frustrated when you color on my new wallpaper! Next time, color on your paper.” “I’m disappointed when you spill juice all over the new clothes I gave you. I expect you to sit still at the table.” “I’m embarrassed when you scream at me. Tell me what’s wrong in a calmer voice.”

Communicate expectations, offer choices, and then move on without haggling.

Empathize with your child’s feelings. Examples: “I know you’re having lots of fun and don’t want to leave. But I’ve made my decision, we’re going home.” “It can be scary flushing the toilet, but it has to be clean for the next person.” (Oh, come on, don’t laugh. This can be a daily battle for parents trying to potty train their twos!) “I understand you get tired of doing the dishes, but we need clean ones for breakfast.”

And here’s one for parents of teens. “You’re disappointed and angry you can’t go to the party. However, I wouldn’t feel like a good parent if I let you go where alcohol might be present.” In the very next breath you’ll have to say, “I don’t care what other parents are letting their children do; I expect you to find a more suitable activity.” I always liked adding this touch: “And it’s not fair of you to make me feel like all the other parents are better than me just because they’re letting their child go to the party.” It works — sometimes.

Communicate expectations, offer choices, and then move on without haggling. Examples: “We’re going home to get your school clothes ready for tomorrow. Do you want to ride in the front or back seat?” “It’s hard to get moving in the morning, but you still need to wear clothes. Do you want to put on the blue or green sweatshirt?”

All of these communication techniques are most effective with toddlers on up. And yes, I really have seen 18 month olds respond to clear verbal direction, as long as it was accompanied with plenty of nonverbal sign language, too. You know, you sit on the floor with the toy cars showing the child that is where they can be driven.

These child guidance strategies take more time and thought than snapping “behave” or threatening a child. At first, you’ll feel awkward and wordy. If you persist, eventually they will become second nature. I’ve seen these techniques put into action by parents and teachers with very constructive results. It’s respectful and gives children much more support and guidance than the vague standbys.

To explore ways to enforce expectations consistently, refer to Parenting Exchange articles “Consistent, Clear Consequences Motivate Cooperative Behavior” and “Reliable and Predictable Discipline: Tips for Enforcing Consequences.”

About the Author — Karen Stephens is director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. For nine years she wrote a weekly parenting column in her local newspaper. Karen has authored early care and education books and is a frequent contributor to *Exchange*.

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EVALUATION

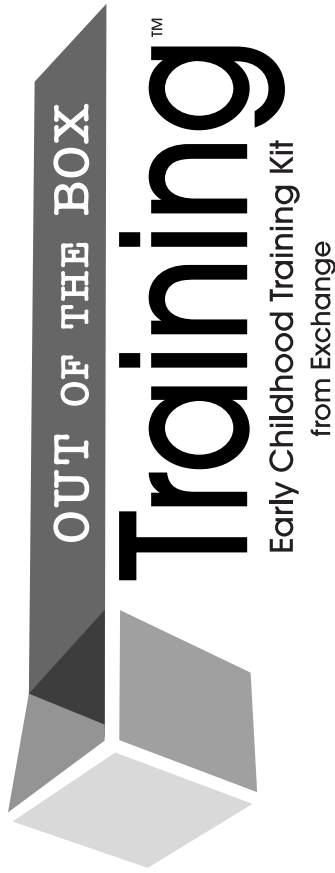
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Training Topic: *What's So Positive About Positive Discipline?*

	Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Length and format of the session	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Presenter's instructional style	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Presenter's knowledge of the topic	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Overall usefulness of the information	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Training room comfort	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The most important thing I learned during this session was . . .

I would like to learn more about . . .



Certificate of Attendance and Participation
1.5 hours training session entitled

What's So Positive About Positive Discipline? ... and Other Mysteries of Child Guidance

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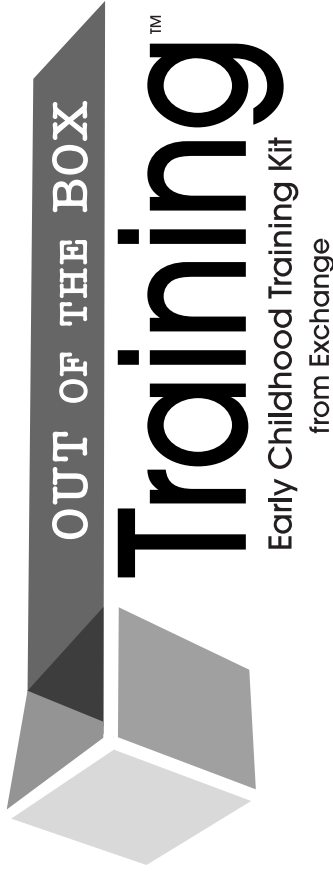
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Roger Neugebauer

Roger Neugebauer, Vice President
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Certificate of Training
1.5 hours training session entitled

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