

# Self-Study Course

## Discipline in Foster Care: Techniques for Parents

Revised 8/03

4 Hours Credit

This self-study course is based on the training curriculum Discipline In Foster Care written by Carol Brice, R.N., M.Ed., developed for the Alaska Center for Resource Families in Fairbanks, Alaska. Mrs. Brice and Susan Thierman, M.Ed, of Family Training Associates of Fairbanks, Alaska have developed most of the work contained in this self-study

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# DISCIPLINE IN FOSTER CARE: TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

## *PART 1: Introduction To The Discipline Gradient*

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Discipline can be the most challenging tasks of any parent. This is especially true for foster parents. Children come into foster care from other homes with different rules, values and expectations. Yet effective and consistent discipline is the best tool a foster parent has to teach appropriate behaviors and help a child internalize self-discipline. Good behavior management can keep your family from going crazy!

Discipline and guidance are very important in raising children. Teaching a child what is expected from him helps him operate successfully and be accepted in society and by those around him. But discipline is not the only role that a parent or a foster parent takes. Nurturing and modeling also play important roles. You should have a balance between *discipline* (teaching self control and teaching right from wrong) *nurturing* (physically caring for a child and tending to his social and emotional needs) and *modeling* (showing the kind of behavior you want from your children.) Many cultures put more emphasis on these aspects of parenting as the way to raise children. This self-study will focus on just on the discipline and behavior management aspect of parenting, but you should put an equal amount of energy into the *modeling* and *nurturing* aspect of caring for foster children.

### ***Why Do We Discipline Children?***

Think of the last time you had to “discipline” a child. Do you remember why? Parents usually discipline children for one of three reasons. We usually provide discipline for *safety* (to protect a child from harm), for *social* concerns (to teach acceptable social behavior) or for *personal* reasons (to provide comfort for family members or to teach cultural and community values.) All of these are important in the job of teaching a child self control and proper behavior.

Foster parents have a special challenge. Foster children have been exposed to discipline and standards of behavior from their birth family. The foster home may or may not find that behavior acceptable. Some children, especially from neglectful or severely drug or alcohol abusing home may not have any rules to follow. The rules you choose for your house should be simple, consistent and fair. Too many rules are confusing and overwhelming for a child who will fail to remember them all. Too few rules do not provide a clear guideline of what is expected.

### ***REASONS TO DISCIPLINE***

- 1. To Teach Kids Safety*
- 2. To Teach Acceptable Social Behavior*
- 3. To Provide Personal Comfort for Family Members*

So how do you know what to do when you need to discipline a child? When you are stumped about a behavior, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is it that my child does (or does not do) that is unacceptable? Describe specifically. Are you concerned for the child or another's safety? Is it out of your own need? Is it a social rule you are teaching? This may clarify what you want to see happen.
2. Is it a behavior that can be ignored? Is it a warning of a potential problem? Or does it need to be stopped immediately?
3. What is a realistic goal for your child? Remember, set achievable smaller goals for your foster child and yourself.

Seek realistic expectations of children based on child development. Certain behaviors are expected at certain ages. But remember, each child is an individual. Each child develops at his own unique pace. Children who have been abused or traumatized may suffer noticeable developmental lags. A twelve-year old child who is delayed socially because of abuse may have to learn basic social skills of sharing and being a friend -- something more appropriately to a eight-year old.

### ***THE DISCIPLINE GRADIENT: Using the Right Tool For the Job***

Remember the saying, "if you only have a hammer in your toolbox, you treat everything like a nail?" This applies to discipline. If you only have one tool for discipline you'll use it for everything. It will then become ineffective (such as lecturing) or harmful (such as spanking.) This self-study features the use of **The Discipline Gradient**, developed by Family Training Associates in Fairbanks, Alaska. **The Discipline Gradient** is a way of thinking about matching the right kind of discipline to the misbehavior.

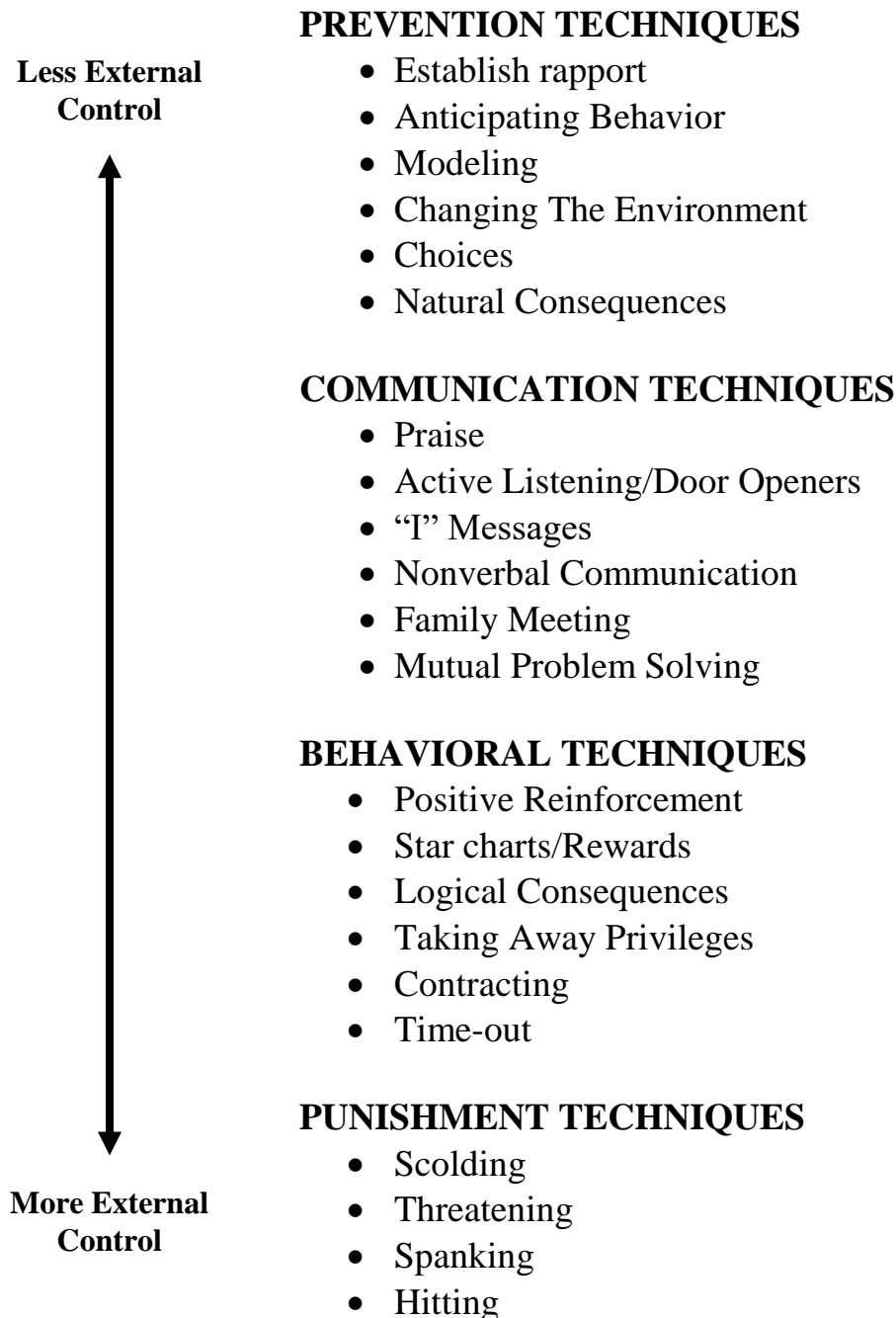
Effective discipline helps a child move from *external* controls (parent, punishment) to *internal* control (self-control). Effective discipline uses more techniques of guidance than techniques of punishment. Many of the discipline techniques in this self-study will not seem like discipline! Yet all are intended to build positive relationships between parent and child and to assist children learn to be responsible for their own behavior.

**The Discipline Gradient (Graph #1)** will be explored in detail in the following pages. As we address each area, remember that the ultimate and most important goal of discipline is not to control a child's behavior, but to help a child gradually learn to control himself. You will get a chance to practice these techniques on paper by completing the exercises. We encourage you to get the most out of this training by complete these exercises as you progress through the reading.

You can use **The Discipline Gradient** in two ways.

1. Use it as a "Grab Bag" of lots of different techniques that you might be able to use in your parenting.
2. Use it as a model to match the right kind of discipline with the corresponding behavior. This will help you become more effective as a foster parent.

# The Discipline Gradient



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**GRAPH #1: The Discipline Gradient**  
*Family Training Associates, Fairbanks, Alaska*



# DISCIPLINE IN FOSTER CARE: TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

## *PART 2: Prevention and Communication Techniques*

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### **PREVENTION TECHNIQUES**

#### **What are PREVENTION TECHNIQUES and how do you use them?**

At the top of **The Discipline Gradient** are Prevention Techniques. Prevention Techniques work best with young children, but are effective throughout childhood. Prevention Techniques are exactly what you think -- they try to stop behavior before it starts. It takes an observant foster parent to anticipate when a child might be having a difficult time. If you know a child is going to have a difficult time, you can structure the situation so the child can do well.

#### **Prevention Techniques**

1. Establishing Rapport
2. Anticipate
3. Modeling
4. Changing the Environment
5. Choices
6. Natural Consequences

#### **TECHNIQUE #1: *Establishing Rapport***

This is the first step with any foster child coming into your family. A child's need to trust is critical. The smoother you can make a child's this transition into your home by providing a safe and nurturing environment, the more likely trust can be established, and rapport can begin to build. Build a relationship with a child. Children are more likely to follow the guidance of someone they know and respect.

- Examples:** *Talking to a child about his interests.*  
*Listening carefully when a child speaks.*  
*Spending time together, playing cards, talking before bedtime.*  
*Pointing out strengths and likes of the child.*  
*Sharing jokes, enjoying each other, having fun.*  
*Making yourself available to the child during the first weeks of placement.*  
*Use the child's name often when talking to the child.*

## **TECHNIQUE #2: *Anticipating Behavior***

You can often anticipate difficulties in children. A child new to your home will not know the rules. A toddler is often easily frustrated and prone to tantrums. Children may have a hard time immediately after family visits. If the foster parent can be aware of potential areas of concern and work to eliminate them before troublesome behaviors can ever begin, the need for “discipline” can be reduced. This may mean being specific about expectations or talking through an upcoming event so the foster parent and the foster child know what the limits and boundaries will be. It may also mean planning ways for children to do well.

**Examples:** *Talk to the child about some basic house rules such as no hitting, bedtime at 9 p.m., everyone has a chore to do.*  
*Talk about feelings about visits with birth parents to prepare a child. Plan a physical activity (such as swimming or playing outside) to let off steam immediately after the visit.*  
*Prepare child for new experiences (going to the dentist, plane ride.)*  
*Plan a routine for bedtime that helps a child wind down.*  
*Learn about a child’s special needs (hyperactivity, FAS/FAE, physical needs, temperament) and adjust your rules accordingly.*

## **TECHNIQUE #3: *Modeling Behavior***

Modeling, or showing the kind of behavior you want, is a form of discipline because you show a child the type of behavior you expect. *Showing* a child what to do is more effective than *telling* a child what to do. You model behavior by your every day actions (such as the way you treat people or the way you deal with your anger). You also model behavior when you take the time to show a child how to do something.

**Examples:** *Model dinner manners: Show a child how to use fork or napkin.*  
*Model telephone manners: Show children how to use phone and how to answer it. If you limit the length phone calls, keep your own short as well.*  
*Use respectful and polite behaviors when talking to all people.*  
*Deal with your anger in a good way (Don’t yell. Use “I” statements.)*  
*Don bring things home from the office if you don’t want kids to steal.*

## **TECHNIQUE #4: *Changing The Environment***

Sometimes changing the physical environment or rearranging a schedule solves a problem. Think about setting up your home to run smoothly and to minimize problems.

**Examples:** *If phone messages get lost, hang a chalkboard near the phone.*  
*If stereos are too loud, invest in earphones.*  
*For young children, include nightlights in their room to make bedrooms less scary.*  
*Childproof your house so that valuables are not within a young child’s reach.*



## ***Try it yourself!***

### **EXERCISE 1: Using the idea of changing the environment to help children follow the rules or change behavior, what ideas do you have for these situations?**

*How would you change the environment to deal with clothes that are left on the floor of the bathroom?*

*How could you change the environment to deal with a child who eats too much “junk” food?*

### **TECHNIQUE #5: Choices**

When you face a potential problem, try to make it a choice for the child. Choices allow for a child’s input and some control. But you as a parent also put limits on what is acceptable. The more input a child has, the less likely he will feel that the solution is imposed upon him. Giving acceptable options and allowing him to choose helps him develop strong decision making skills. Choices for toddlers should be between two items; adolescents can have more control.

**Examples:** *“Do you want oatmeal or pancakes for breakfast?” (Do not ask “Do you want breakfast?”)*  
*Offer the choice between three chores for an older child or teen. (Do not let them decide whether or not they want to do a chore.)*  
*Let a child have some control over clothes, hair, friends, etc.*  
*For going to a store with a young child, offer the choice “You can walk by my side or ride in the shopping cart. You decide.”*

### **TECHNIQUE #6: Natural Consequences**

Consequences are events that are triggered by another event. With natural consequences, no intervention happens. For example, if you drop a glass, it will probably break. Natural consequences are the consequences that occur if absolutely no outside intervention takes place. By simple pointing out the results of the consequence (no lectures please), they can be an effective way of teaching.

**Examples:** *Leaving home without lunch - the consequence is you get hungry.*  
*Saying hurtful things to someone - the consequence is that she no longer wants to be your friend.*

There are times when natural consequences cannot be used. Either the situation does not have any immediate consequences, or the consequences are too expensive or too dangerous. One example of when *not* to use natural consequences is when a child is playing in the street. The natural consequence would be that the child may be hit by a car. This is too risky and dangerous. When natural consequences are not appropriate, a logical consequence can be used. Logical consequences will be discussed in **Part Two** of this self-study.

## **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES**

### **What Are COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES and How Do You Use Them?**

The next group of techniques along **The Discipline Gradient** are Communication Techniques. Communication encourages children to talk about feelings, builds strong foster parent-foster child relationships, and motivates children to be responsible for their own behaviors. Communication involves using your words effectively to managing behaviors.

#### **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES:**

7. Praise
8. Active Listening/Door Opener
9. "I" Messages
10. Nonverbal Communication
11. Family Council
12. Mutual Problem Solving

### **TECHNIQUE #7: *Praise***

Praise can be an effective tool for reinforcing behavior that you want to see repeated. Often children get more attention for their misbehavior than for their good behavior. To be effective, we have to give more positive verbal praise to a child. This draws attention to what you want the child to do. In order for praise to be effective, it should follow four guidelines:

1. It should be specific and focus on a child's behavior.
2. It should be offered immediately after the event.
3. It should be sincere, and never forced.
4. It should not be coupled with a negative comment.

**Example:** To 8 year old Sarah

NOT: "*You're a great kid!*" (too general).

BUT TRY: "*You made my job easier when you cleared the dishes from the table.*"



**EXAMPLE:** To Jerry (14 years) after a haircut:

NOT: *“Wow, you look human again.”* (negative comment)

BUT TRY: *“Now that your hair is trimmed I can really see those great eyes of yours.”*



### ***Try it yourself!***

**EXERCISE 2: Using the four rules of giving praise, how would you rewrite these comments to be more effective?**

To Candy, Age 9. *“I’m glad you got B’s on your report card, but your sister gets mostly A’s.”* (negative comment)

To Jimmy, Age 10. *“You’ve sure made a lot of progress since you’ve been here.”* (too general)

## **TECHNIQUE #8: Active Listening**

Active listening is when you, the foster parent, tries to listen carefully not only to what the child is saying but the feeling behind his words as well. In active listening, the listener gives back his or her own impression of what the child is saying. When children feel they are being listened to, they are less likely to resort to negative behavior.

Follow these three steps when trying to use active listening:

1. *Listen carefully to what your child says.*
2. *Formulate in your own mind what she is feeling and expressing.*
3. *Feed back to her in your own words the feeling she has just expressed.*  
*“Sounds like...” “You feel...” “I hear you saying...”*

Active listening is an important tool in problem solving and communication because it encourages the foster parent to listen fully without rushing to solve a problem for a child. Active listening also means using “door openers” such as “Hmmm...”, “Tell me some more...”, “What do you think?”

Active listening means avoiding “door-closers”. Door-closers shut communication and include phrases such as: “What did you do now?” “Don’t be always running to me with your problems.” “You made your bed, now you sleep in it.”

**Examples:** 8 year old Sally: *“Miss Smith is always picking on me at school.”*  
Response: *“You don’t like the way Miss Smith treats you?”*

4 year old Joe: *“No! You can’t make me!”*  
Response: *“Hmmm. You sound like you want to do it your own way.”*



### *Try it yourself!*

**EXERCISE 3: Using the active listening rules, how would you respond to these comments?**

12-year-old Scott: *"We never have anything good to eat around here!"*

Your response: \_\_\_\_\_

6-year-old John: *"I hate my sister, she's a brat!"*

Your response: \_\_\_\_\_

### **TECHNIQUE #9: "I" Messages**

Active listening is appropriate when the child has the problem. "I" messages are appropriate when the parent is bothered by the behavior or wants the child to change a behavior. An "I" message describes how you feel and how a situation is affecting you. It does not blame, belittle or accuse the child. "I" messages are useful in problem solving and when you feel very strongly about a matter. It is a good tool to teach children to use when feeling angry or hurt.

There are four parts to an "I" statement:

1. Behavior "When \_\_\_\_\_ (describe the behavior)
2. Feeling I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (describe your feeling)
3. Reason because \_\_\_\_\_ (why do you feel that way)
4. Action so please \_\_\_\_\_." (make a positive suggestion)

You have a right to the way you feel. However, you must not make someone else responsible for the way you feel. It is a sign of adulthood to take responsibility for your feelings and how you handle them. This is why we can get angry, but we restrain from hitting, slapping and destroying property. We even have laws that prevent these behaviors toward others. It is what we want our foster children to learn -- that you can have all your feelings, but you must be responsible for what you do with them. Teach kids how to use "I" messages, too!

## EXAMPLES OF "I" STATEMENTS

INSTEAD OF:

TRY:

"Don't play on the stairs. You'll fall."

"When you play on the stairs, I feel scared because I'm afraid you'll hurt yourself. So please play on the living room floor."

"Share your truck or I'll take it away from you."

"When you keep your truck all to yourself, I feel sad for Tommy because he wants to play with you. So please take turns with him."

"Don't you sass back to me, young man!"

"When you talk back to me like that, I get very angry because it is disrespectful. You need to take a five minute time-out to think about what you said."



### *Try it yourself!*

**EXERCISE 4: Using "I" statements as shown in this section, how could you respond to these statements with an "I" statement?**

"There's mud all over the floor. Why can't you remember to take your shoes off?"

*Rewrite as an "I" statement* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

"Be quiet! Can't I have a few minutes of quiet to talk on the phone?"

*Rewrite as an "I" statement* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **TECHNIQUE #10: *Non Verbal Messages***

We all know that actions speak louder than words. You can help a child do the right thing by sending him non-verbal messages to either reinforce or stop a behavior. When you see a child doing what he is supposed to do or doing a great job, catch his eye and give a wink. Pat him on the back or head, or give him the thumbs up sign. Use signs of affection (such as hugs, pats on the back, kisses, tousling the hair) to send messages of acceptance. You can also stop a child from doing the wrong thing by catching a child's eye and shaking your head, or gesturing what he is supposed to do. For children with repeated problems, you can work out a signal to let the child know when he is getting out of control, (such as tapping your chin with your thumb) or better yet, a signal that you see he is doing a good job. This "secret signal" reinforces good behavior with words and also builds a bond between the parent and child.

## **TECHNIQUE #11: *Family or House Meetings***

Meeting regularly as a family to discuss problems helps children take ownership in the health and decisionmaking of their families. Foster families who care for older children may wish to call them "house meetings" because the word family might be too intense for children who feel their birth family is their "real" family. Some suggestions for making family or house meetings work include:

1. The family meets together on a regular basis.
2. Rules for the meeting are decided on by the family. Meeting can be very informal or Robert's Rules of Order may be adopted.
3. Family members can take turns leading the Family Meeting.
4. Positive and negative issues can be discussed.
5. Hurtful comments and name calling are not allowed.
6. Anything said at the meeting stays at the meeting. RESPECT for each other is a must.
7. Decisions are made by compromise and consensus. Everyone must agree.
8. Family meetings are more successful when all children are over 5 years of age.
9. It is helpful to post an "agenda" for the Family Meeting a day or two ahead of time. Family members wishing to discuss an issue can add to the agenda.
10. End your Family or House Meeting on a positive note. Close with a game, or everyone saying something about a chosen topic, or each person throwing a stuffed animal to another person, in turn and complimenting the person at the same time. You may also have a positive activity such as a video, a game or dessert.

## **TECHNIQUE #12: *Problem Solving***

Problem solving is an effective tool to use with children and an important skill to learn. Problem solving can be used when one party has the problem (such as a foster parent has a problem with a teen's long telephone calls or missed curfews) and another party has the solution (teen controls length of phone calls or time he gets in). Problem solving means finding a solution acceptable to both parties.

The elements in problem solving include:

1. *Identify the conflict/problem.*
2. *Both parties must agree to try to find a solution.*
3. *Both child and adult brainstorm ideas. If a child is old enough, this should be done on paper. No idea is too crazy!*
4. *After brainstorming is complete, sit together and compare ideas. Eliminate any inappropriate ideas, or things that neither of you could accept.*
5. *Arrive at one idea to try. You both must agree to try the same technique. (consensus).*
6. *Make a plan to re-evaluate how the plan is working in one week.*
7. *Agree to make changes if necessary.*

**Example:** Teen and foster parent come together to find a way to deal with phone use. The parent thinks the teen spends so much time on the phone that she can never use it. The teen hates it when her foster parent bugs her about always being on the phone. They decide they will try problem solving to find a way the teen can use the phone and the foster parent will be able to use it as well. They brainstorm possible solutions. These include:

Get teen own phone

Use a timer

No phone calls during week days

Teen pays part of phone bill

Teen talks as long as she or he wants

Foster family gets call waiting

After brainstorming, the two look at what would not be acceptable to them. Foster mom crosses out "get teen own phone." The family can't afford it. The teen crosses out "no calls during week days". She wants to talk with her friends. Finally a compromise is reached combining several solutions. Weekday calls are limited to ten minutes and weekend calls are limited to half hour. Family will get call waiting and teen must take messages for family during that time. Family will try this over two weekends and then meet to see how it's working. Teen promises to follow time period by watching the clock and parent promises not to interrupt teen while on the phone. If the parent has to remind the teen to get off the phone, she loses the next night of telephone privileges.

When using problem solving with younger kids, you may have to help them come up with ideas for solutions. But let them have some say into what is chosen and how long to try. Teaching kids how to "work things out" is a valuable life long skill. Always check back to see how things are working. If things are not working, say so and start over again with the problem solving process.



# DISCIPLINE IN FOSTER CARE: TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

## *PART 3: Behavioral and Punishment Techniques*

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### **BEHAVIORAL TECHNIQUES**

#### **What are BEHAVIORAL TECHNIQUES And How Do You Use Them?**

The next group of techniques along **The Discipline Gradient** are Behavioral Techniques. Behavioral techniques involve more externally imposed discipline than either communication or prevention techniques. Behavioral Techniques are very useful for changing an existing pattern of behavior. Behaviorist Techniques work best if the foster parent is consistent in applying the negative and positive reinforcers, and if attention given immediately to the behaviors you are trying to encourage or discourage. At its simplest, behavioral techniques means that you reward behavior you want a child to continue, and either ignore or give a negative consequence for a behavior that you want a child to stop.

#### **BEHAVIORAL TECHNIQUES**

13. Positive Reinforcement
14. Star Charts/Rewards
15. Logical Consequences
16. Taking Away Privileges
17. Contracting
18. Time-out

#### **TECHNIQUE #13: *Positive Reinforcement***

A Broadway song sums it up, “Accentuate the positive. Eliminate the negative.” Everyone has a need for attention, stimulation and recognition. If positive attention is rarely given, most children will provoke negative attention rather than be ignored. Foster children often see themselves in a negative light so may seem to want negative attention. “I’m a bad kid, so I do bad things” is their reasoning. Your attention can be either positive or negative. Attention can be **VERBAL**, such as praise, compliments, descriptive comments, threats, etc. Attention can be **NONVERBAL** such as hugs, smiles watching, listening, spanking, frowning, etc. It is important for foster parents to give more positive reinforcement than negative. **TO MAKE CHANGE IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 50-100 REINFORCEMENTS ARE NEEDED!**

One way to satisfy a child’s need for positive attention is to set aside a specific time each day to spend with that child. Giving as little as 15 minutes a day to a child may noticeably reduce disruptive behavior.



### *Try it yourself!*

**EXERCISE 5: How can you use positive attention with your foster child? Answer these questions to find out.**

What is your foster child's favorite types of attention? (Sitting on your lap, having you watch her play, being read to, etc.)

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Name one behavior you try to encourage with your foster child.

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What do you now say or do to encourage that behavior?

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What are three additional things you could say or do to encourage that behavior?

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How many times a day will you try to encourage this behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

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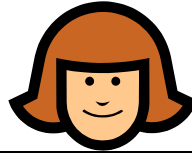
### **TECHNIQUE #14: *Star Charts and Rewards***

A star chart or a reward system is simply a record of reinforcement for desired behaviors. When a child performs in a certain way, he receives points or a sticker on a chart. When the chart is full or the child gets a certain number of stickers, the child receives a reward. The rewards can be either be *social*, like an extra book at bedtime or a trip with dad to the zoo, or *material* such as an ice cream cone, a game, a trip or money. It can also be *increased privileges* such as an extra half hour to stay up or a choice in videos. Charts give a child the extra incentive of visually seeing how close he is to his goal. To make it work, the *rewards must be wanted by the child*. Other guidelines for using charts include:

1. *Reinforcers should be used often (too long between is discouraging).*
2. *Reinforcers should be used soon after behavior.*
3. *Reinforcer should be wanted by child.*
4. *Task should be small enough (or broken into small enough pieces so that the child can be successful).*

## Sample Star Chart For A Younger Child:

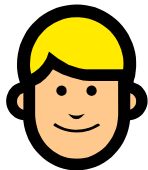
Tammy's Star Chart



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Tammy will get 1 star ☆ for each day she gets to bed by her 9 o'clock bedtime. If she gets three stars in a row, she will get an extra ten minutes of bedtime reading on the fourth night.

## Sample Reward Chart For A School Age Child:



John's Behavior Chart

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Make Bed							X
Do homework by 8 p.m.							X
Plays cooperatively with sister							X

Every morning, John's bed will be checked before he goes to school and at night his homework will be checked and the day will be reviewed to see if he plays well with his sister. Everyday he will get a point for each thing he completes on this list. If by Saturday, he has earned twelve points, he can trade them in for a trip to the video arcade on Saturday afternoon.

SIGNED:     Fran Foster    

    Johnny Jones



## **TECHNIQUE #15: *Logical Consequences***

In the Prevention Techniques section, we addressed natural consequences. When a child's action does not have a natural consequence or when the natural consequences are not acceptable to the parent, the parent may choose to impose a logical consequence. A logical consequence is a consequence devised by the parent which is related to the child's behavior. For example, taking away dessert one night because a bike was left outside in the rain doesn't make a lot of sense. The consequence is not connected. But if a bike is left out in the rain, and the child loses the privilege of using the bike for two days because he did not show care for his possession, that is a logical and related consequence. Logical consequences are good teachers of self-discipline.

**EXAMPLE:** *A child leaves her toys lying around the floor.*

A logical consequence would be that the toys are picked up and put away for a day. The child loses the right to play with the toys for one day.

**EXAMPLE:** *A child does not do the dishes on his assigned night and the foster mother ends up doing his chore.*

A logical consequence might be that the child has to do dishes for two nights in a row or that the foster mother takes 50 cents from his allowance to pay herself for doing his chore.



### ***Try it yourself!***

**EXERCISE 6: Write down a logical consequence for the following situations?**

*A teen comes in late for curfew.* A logical consequence would be: \_\_\_\_\_

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*A child hits his sister.* A logical consequence would be: \_\_\_\_\_

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## TECHNIQUE #16: *Taking Away Privileges*

When a child has not responded to milder discipline techniques, sometimes it is necessary to take away a privilege. A privilege is something that the child likes to do or is an activity that the child does on a regular basis. Let the child know ahead of time that a certain action will result in the loss of the privilege. Then, it is the child's choice. He either chooses to stay within the limits, or he accepts the consequences. Privileges can include:

- Going to a friends house after school
- Watching television
- Going to bed at a certain time
- Using the computer or playing Nintendo
- Going to sports, Scouts
- Talking on the Phone
- Riding Your bike
- Staying after school to play basketball

## TECHNIQUE #17: *Contracts*

A contract is a mutual agreement between parent and child resulting from negotiation and is written down. First of all, negotiate, compromise, and come up with an agreement. Write it down, sign it and try it. The contract should contain:

1. *Date the agreement starts and ends.*
2. *Behaviors targeted for change.*
3. *Reward: what kind, how often, who gives.*
4. *Signatures of involved parties.*
5. *Time limit and review date.*

Contracts include positive reinforcements. That means the reward should be desirable to the child; big tasks should be broken into smaller steps; and the reward should be not too far into the future. Both should agree with the terms of the contract and should sign it.

A sample contract may look like this:

<b>CONTRACT</b>	
Contract between _____ and _____.	
Effective dates from _____ to _____.	
We agree to the following:	
_____	
_____	
Bonus if contract kept: _____.	
Penalty if contract not kept: _____.	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
Child	Parent
This contract will be reviewed two (2) weeks from date of agreement on _____.	

Let's look at how one family using a contract to solve a problem behavior.

**EXAMPLE:** *Jeremy, age 12, does not come home after school, but lingers and plays on the playground. Sometimes he goes home with friends, but does not call his parents. Both Jeremy's parents work and do not arrive home until 4:30 p.m. Jeremy's school is over at 3:30 p.m. Jeremy loves airplanes and being around pilots. He wants to be a pilot when he is older. He likes to read magazines about flying and sometimes buys model planes. His parents try to write a contract with him.*

**CONTRACT:**

Contract between *Jeremy and Mom and Dad.* Effective dates from *March 2 to March 6.*

**We agree to the following:** *Jeremy will to go from his school to home without stopping at the playground or going to a friends house without for five days in a row. When he gets home, he will call Mom at work immediately.*

**Bonus if contract kept:** *Dad will take him to the airplane museum on Saturday if he can follow the plan for one week. He will take him to buy an airplane model when he is able to follow the plan for two weeks.*

**Penalty if contract not kept:** *Jeremy will not be able to have any friends over to visit for the next week or go to a friends house the following week.*

**Signed:** Jeremy      Mom      Dad      **Date:** March 1

This contract will be reviewed two (2) weeks from date of agreement on March 15.

**TECHNIQUE #18: Time-Out**

Time-out interrupts unacceptable behavior by removing the child from the situation temporarily. After the child has been away from the scene for a short time, he should be allowed to return and practice acceptable behavior. The rule for length of time-out is usually: "One minute per one year of the child's age." The time-out place needs to be safe and not frightening for a child. It is best to avoid the garage, outside or in a dark space for this reason.

You will need to walk the child through the steps the first few times. The waiting time begins when crying and whining stops. The foster parent tells the child when time-out is over. Appropriate behavior following time-out should be reinforced. The foster parent should be consistent and matter-of-fact about using time-out. The foster parent should not talk or argue with the child before or during a time-out (except to tell her to take one). Lecturing the child after a time-out is probably not helpful.

For toddlers, time-out can be as simple as setting the child a short distance away for the situation. After the situation is under control, return to her and after a brief explanation, reinforce her for appropriate behaviors.

Don't use time-out for everything. Pick a few related behaviors (such as tantrums, hitting or namecalling) and be consistent in using timeout in response to these behaviors.

**Would time-out work with your child? Ask yourself these questions:**

1. *Does your child understand the concept of “wait” and “quiet”?*
2. *For what unacceptable behavior would you use time-out?*
3. *How long would time-out be for your child?*
4. *What location would you choose for the time-out? (Should be far enough away from activity so that child does not provoke attention, but close enough so she knows what she is missing).*
5. *How would you explain time-out to your child? (Use exact words)*
6. *In what ways could you reinforce acceptable behavior after your child returned from a time-out?*

## **PUNISHMENT TECHNIQUES**

At the bottom of **The Discipline Gradient** are Punishment Techniques. The section of punishment is at the bottom of the gradient because it is imposed externally upon a child. The child does not learn what to do, but learns what not to do. Often, punishment techniques are used when the adult is very angry or out of control. In this situation, the punishment may be unrealistic or may be disproportionate to the behavior. Punishment sends the message that the child is a bad person and can't control himself. **THIS IS EXACTLY THE MESSAGE WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE CHILDREN!** We want them to know that their behavior is unacceptable, but that they are lovable and capable. If children feel they are bad, they will act bad. Building the positive aspects of a child's character will help them want to behave in appropriate ways.

If you find yourself using punishment frequently, you may need to look at your own anger. Foster parenting is a tough job. Sometimes the frustration is too much. Sometimes children might trigger anger in us that affects our ability to parent. When we are frustrated or angry, we may be tempted to use punishments such as spanking or threatening. We must remember to separate the behavior from the child. We don't have to ignore behavior that is wrong or inappropriate. But as foster parents, we should be clear that we don't let discipline turn into punishment because of our own anger.

## ***Regulations on Discipline: What Is Not Allowed In Foster Care?***

The foster care regulations clearly state what types of discipline are not allowed in caring for a foster child. These restrictions are designed to keep the foster home a safe and positive place for children. When you agree to be a foster parent, you agree to follow these guidelines.

### **A child in care may not be:**

- (1) removed from the other children for more than 10 minutes for a young child (*unless approved in the treatment plan for the child*);
- (2) disciplined in association with food or rest;
- (3) punished for bedwetting or actions in regard to toileting or toilet training;
- (4) subjected to discipline administered by another child;
- (5) deprived of family contacts, mail, clothing, medical care, therapeutic activities designated in the child's plan of care, or contact with the child's placement worker or legal representative;
- (6) subjected to verbal abuse, to derogatory remarks about the child or members of the child's family or to threats to expel the child from the foster home;
- (7) placed in a locked room;
- (8) physically restrained, except when necessary to protect a young child from accident, protect persons on the premises from physical injury, or protect property from serious damage and then only passive physical restraint may be used; or
- (9) mechanically restrained, except for protection such as seat belts.

***No spanking or corporal punishment may be used on a child in care. That means no hitting, slapping, pinching, hair pulling, hand slapping, ear pulling or other physical actions that cause pain or discomfort to a child.***



# DISCIPLINE IN FOSTER CARE: TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

## *Conclusion*

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This self-study has covered many aspects of discipline. We have sought to give you many tools in your tool box so that you will have a variety of techniques to use when guiding children and addressing behavior problems. You should be using the Prevention Techniques and the Communication Techniques every day as you interact with children. The Behavioral Techniques are good for ongoing misbehaviors that you want to change. If you find yourself using too many Punishment Techniques, you should review the other discipline techniques presented in this self-study and build your skills in these areas.

When asking yourself about the right techniques to use, ask yourself these questions:

1. *What does my child do (or not do)? Describe specifically. (NATURE OF THE PROBLEM)*
2. *Is it a behavior that can be ignored? Is it a warning of a potential problem? Or does it need to be stopped immediately? (SEVERITY)*
3. *What is a realistic goal for your child? Remember, set achievable smaller goals for your foster child and yourself. (GOAL)*
4. *Is there a way to prevent or minimize this behavior's occurrence? (TRY PREVENTION TECHNIQUES)*
5. *Is there a way to use communication or problem solving that would change the behavior? (USE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES)*
6. *Is there a set behavior that needs to be changed or made less frequent? (TRY BEHAVIORIST TECHNIQUES)*
7. *Do I tend to use threatening, punishing, name calling, yelling or spanking as discipline? (PUNISHMENT TECHNIQUES) If so, I need to review what is not allowed in foster care and review the other techniques in this section for use with my children. If these don't work, I need to find assistance from a counselor, social worker or another foster parent.*



## TEST