



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



January 2009 – Child Discipline

Dawn Taylor is the Community Mobilizer for Care Partnership Centre Region *Communities That Care*. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

You ask your child to do something and your child ignores you. You offer rewards and your child offers excuses. You plead and your child responds with defiance.

Discipline can be one of the hardest parts of parenting. Yet kids of all ages need to know how to act and how not to act in order to develop self-control and self-discipline.

Approach discipline as a way of helping your child learn how to get along in the world. You can do this by establishing clear expectations about appropriate behavior and consequences. This means letting your child know exactly what behavior is expected and what consequences will follow.

Always follow through with consequences. Letting kids talk you out of consequences or negotiate new ones after the fact will only lead to problems. A child who learns that consequences are negotiable will have an argument for every infraction.

As much as possible, react calmly when your child misbehaves. Convey the message that the consequence is a predictable result of your child's behavior. "You know the rules and you know the consequences." When children experience consequences, they learn to become responsible for their actions.

Enlist the help of others in making sure your child hears consistent messages. A preschooler who knows that whining is just as unacceptable to grandma as it is to mom and dad is more likely to give it up. A teen who knows that the "cool" uncle he looks up to has the same no-tolerance attitude about underage drinking as his parents will be less likely to accept a drink.

Don't be surprised if discipline becomes more complicated as kids get older. As a normal part of development, teens will question authority. Listen with an open mind, but don't let them use their emerging cognitive skills to talk you out of consequences. Decide which rules are most important and be consistent with those. For example, you may decide to relax standards about hairstyle or clothing choices as long as your child does well in school and at home.

It is a fact that as teens begin spending more time away from the family and in the company of peers, opportunities to engage in risky behaviors increase. This is your cue to take prevention efforts up a notch. Take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to bring up tough topics like substance abuse or sexual activity. For instance, a news report about a drinking and driving incident can provide the opening you need to engage your child in a discussion of dangerous drinking and your expectations. Short conversations that come up

spontaneously in informal situations such as this can be more effective than long lectures during times of duress.

The pay-off for establishing clear expectations and consequences is huge. Preschoolers who misbehave can frustrate parents to no end, but teens who lack self-control and self-discipline can end up harming themselves and others. Parents who discipline effectively beginning when children are young lay the groundwork for responsible behavior later on.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*
Serving State College Area School District
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer
814-237-6191
dtaylor105@gmail.com
Web address: carecentreregion.org

Centre County *Communities That Care*
Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and
Philipsburg-Osceola
Elizabeth Eckley, Community Mobilizer
814-404-9511
centrecountyctc@yahoo.com
Web address: centrecountyctc.org