

A gentle, effective discipline tool for parents and caregivers

1. CONNECT BEFORE YOU DIRECT.

2. STAY CLOSE.

3. D.A.D.D. = Describe/Disapprove – Affirm – Discover – Do-Over

4. INSIST.

5. FOLLOW THROUGH.

This simple, 5-step process takes far longer to explain than it actually takes to follow in practice! It is a wonderful process that can be adapted to suit almost any age, providing you with a natural framework for guiding children towards more positive behaviour. One of the best things about it is that during the whole process, parents use their own words, their own language, helping it feel natural for each family.

1. Connect before you direct. There is simply no point in ‘talking into thin air’ when your child is yelling in another direction. You have to connect with your child before you can direct their behaviour in a more positive direction. Touch them gently on the shoulder, make eye contact – once you have made a face-to-face connection, there is a shift in their thinking.

2. Stay Close: Your calm physical presence will help calm your child. Has directing your child from across the room ever been effective? I doubt it. Being calm, and staying close, right by their side, you have a much better chance of ‘holding’ your child.

3. D.A.D.D. = Describe/Disapprove – Affirm – Discover – Do-Over

First...DESCRIBE and if necessary, DISAPPROVE

Begin by describing what happened very briefly. “You hit your sister.” “I see you are very upset.” If necessary, express clear disapproval for the action. “It is hurtful to behave like that.” “We don’t speak/act that way in our family.” “It is ok to be upset, but it is not ok to hit.” Speak with quiet directness. Say as little as possible. Mean it.

And... AFFIRM

We know that we are meant to separate a child’s actions from his/her whole being, but it’s not always easy. To achieve this, the describe/disapproval step needs to be followed up right away by an affirmation... “You hardly ever speak like that.” “So often you do kind/helpful things.” “You usually have such gentle hands.”

Then... DISCOVER

Then the adult discovers what the subtle issues are, wondering to him or herself “What’s up?” or checking lovingly with the child “Something must be bothering you, what is it?” The

question must come at the right time to get an honest response: this might be AFTER the child has had time to calm down from the heat of the moment.

Finally... DO-OVER

When the issue is clarified, the adult can help the child do it over, saying kindly and firmly "Let's find a way to say what you need to say kindly/without hitting." "You may make up for the words you used, and then you can say what is bothering you." "How could you say/do that kindly? What could you say that would work better?"

4. Insist. Insist that your child can do the right thing. Insist that they 'do-over' their actions. Your children will consistently test your boundaries – it's their job! It is your job to consistently reinforce the boundaries that you have chosen for your child.

5. Follow through. Stay close, and help your child follow through with whatever action you have insisted upon. Be beside them whilst they do it. They are learning how to live up to social expectations and boundaries, and we can help them as they learn.

This 5-step process usually begins learning, more than a forced apology.

With two to 7-year-olds, you don't have to do all of the steps, all of the time. Once you are familiar with the process, you begin to learn which steps work better for which ages...

Discovering the cause of an incident may be impossible with a two-year-old, and a do-over becomes irrelevant for two to 4-year-olds if it can't be done right away, in the moment. If you have to wait for a three to 4-year-old to calm down, chances are they will have forgotten about the incident and have no idea what you're talking about when you finally come back to it!

The less you talk, the more children listen. Try to model behaviour you want to see – imitation of positive behaviour comes more naturally to children and is easier than correction of difficult behaviour!

Modeling Genuine Apologies at Home

Parents can model or demonstrate by making authentic apologies and do-overs to each other in front of the children "Oh honey, I am sorry, that came out unkindly. Let me try again... and then can we have a kiss so I know you forgive me? I guess we are all learning to be kind."

Parents only need to do this – genuinely – a few times for the children to begin imitating. Far too often parents leave genuine apologies until after the children are in bed – depriving children of an opportunity to learn about real apologies.

(Based on the work of Kim John Payne, M.Ed.)