Parenting WITH Amy SM

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Discipline

Most parents immediately think that discipline means to punish. "I'm going to discipline her" or "she needs to be disciplined." What they are really saying is "I'm furious and I'm going to make him stop." They are trying to eradicate that bad behavior immediately. That is, in fact, what discipline is not.

Discipline is not punishment. Punishment is negative and punitive. It focuses on external control or parental control. Often, children get defensive because punishment breeds hostility and frustration. Usually when parents punish, they are mad and want their child to suffer or pay for the mistake or choice they made. Most parents I talk to feel they have to punish their children when they misbehave. They are equally as focused on the consequences. I hear: "I've run out of consequences" "no consequence seems to work" or "what consequences can you suggest"? Punishment almost always backfires. And when it does, parents are so angry that they try harder to get their child under control.

So you're asking, then what is discipline? Discipline is positive, encouraging and nurturing and aims to teach, train or lead. Teaching our kids how we expect them to behave. Discipline corrects undesirable behavior, promotes security in the parent-child relationship and creates an atmosphere of love and concern from the parent's end. Most children respond to this approach and usually want to please. Discipline is something you do with, not to your child.

The parent-child relationship is the single most important component to successful discipline. If our children do not feel our love, feel our connection to them, feel secure in the most important relationship in their life, they are not going to want to cooperate.

Next, we want to try and figure out the problem. Perhaps she's tired, sick or hungry. If so, don't make excuses and excuse the behavior, just be sensitive.

To be consistent is of utmost importance. When we are unpredictable, our children get confused and their behavior is worse.

Are you able to keep your emotions in check? When our kids are emotional, it is so easy to get on their roller coaster. This, too, escalates their behavior. They will draw strength from us if we can stay in control.

Discipline is a pretty important part of this thing called parenting. Remember, it is more about having the optimal relationship with our children rather focusing on certain techniques. That is because when our children feel a connection to us, they feel good and when they feel good, they act good.