Effective Discipline for Young Children
(Ages 2 - 5)

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors
Objectives

» Gain understanding of:
  – Stages of Development
  – How Children Think and Feel

» Learn Effective Discipline Methods:
  – Discipline Talk
  – Shaping Behaviors
  – Coordinating with Parents

» Understand When to Seek Help
Introduction

» A young child’s job is to explore their environment and test limits – this is how they learn

» The caregiver’s job is to allow exploration while at the same time setting firm limits

» Understanding how children develop can help in this process
Stages of Development: 2-3 year olds

» Mastering body movements
» Growing vocabulary (about 50 new words each month)
» Developing independence (Love to say “No!” and “Mine!”)
» Separation issues
» Playing with peers
» No concept of time
Development Stages for Children 4-5

» Continued development in large & small motor skills & eye/hand coordination

» Vocabulary grows from about 1500 words at age 4 to about 2000 words by age 5

» More confident & independent

» Playing in groups & developing special friends

» Vivid imagination

» Little concept of time
» Children do not think like adults
» Children’s annoying behavior is fun for them & developmentally appropriate
» Children become very engrossed in their activity
» Like adults, children have moods
» Rarely think before acting
» Thinking is concrete
» Learn through repetition
» Feelings & communication
» Helping children identify feelings
» Validating children’s feelings
» Teaching appropriate expression of feelings
Special Considerations for Children Affected by Deployment

» Effects of a parent’s deployment
» Acting out
» Creative approaches to express emotions
Discipline Talk

» Connect before you direct
» Address the child by name
» Keep discipline brief & simple
» Ask the child to repeat your request
» Make an offer they can’t refuse
» Try “Stop” instead of “No”
» Begin directives with “I want”
Discipline Talk

» Give choices
» Model appropriate language and behavior
» Calm the listener down
» Use rhyme rules
» Use “I” statements
The most effective methods of classroom discipline are:

» Ignoring the behavior
» Redirecting the child
» Natural and Logical Consequences
» Positive attention
» “Thinking time”
Ignoring the Behavior

Used to stop harmless, unacceptable behavior

» Move away from the child
» Turn your back
» Avoid eye contact
» Stop any conversation with the child
» Ignore any protests or excuses
Redirecting or Directing

» Helpful when the child wants something they can’t have or is doing something they shouldn’t be doing

» Example: The child is grabbing at another child’s toy.

» Method: Offer the child another toy or distract them with another activity.
Natural & Logical Consequences

» Experiencing the consequences of their choices teaches self-discipline

» Natural consequences (child unable to play with toy they broke)

» Logical consequences (parent requires child to clean up the mess he/she made)
Positive Attention

The positive interactions & feedback children receive when they are not misbehaving:

» Give physical attention
» Be specific
» Give immediate feedback
» Plan parent-child activities
» Catch children being good
“Thinking Time”

» Take the child to a “thinking time” area and sit with them as you review their poor choice and discuss better choices

» Appropriate for children 2 to 10 years

» Should be used to shape behavior, not as a punishment
Aggressive Behaviors in the Classroom

Example: child hits another child to get a toy

» Suggest an alternative approach If the child hits again, say “Stop! I can’t let you hit. It hurts people.”

» Take the child to a “thinking time” area

» Help the victim say to the child “I don’t like it when you hit.”

» Ask the aggressive child to say, “I’m sorry and I won’t hit you again.”
Working with Parents

» Home discipline
» Classroom discipline
» Share discipline issues
» Work with the parents
» Report positive behavior
Remember –

» The caregiver’s responsibility is to focus on the behavior, & let the parents know what they observe

» It is up to the parent to decide when & if to seek additional help for their child
Taking Care of Yourself

» Be kind to yourself
» Pamper yourself whenever you can
» Give yourself credit for the good job you have done
» Seek support from other parents and peers
When To Seek Help

» The child’s misbehavior is dangerous
» The misbehavior does not improve after implementing discipline methods
» The child seems sad & withdrawn
» The child seems angry most of the time
» Other children do not want to play with the child
» Always seek help if you think you are at risk for hurting a child
» Family rules and limits provide children with a sense of stability
» Effective discipline teaches self-control
» Experiencing the natural and logical consequences of their choices teaches children self-discipline
» Effective discipline requires good communication
» Seeking help is a sign of strength
Questions
Resources

» Military Community Services
» Chaplain and Local Clergy
» Military OneSource  (800) 342-9647
» TRICARE  www.tricare.osd.mil
» Behavioral Health Services
References

» www.defenselink.mil
» www.militarychild.org
» www.survivingdeployment.com
» www.deploymentkids.com
» www.parentingpress.com
» www.familyeducation.com
» www.parenting-ed.org
» www.askdrsears.com