

# April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

## What To Do Instead of Shouting and Spanking

- Take a deep breath ... and another. Then remember you are the adult.
- Learn what is typical for the child's age. Many discipline problems happen because parents expect too much of their children. (For example, 2 year-olds cannot sit still for hours.)
- Plan ahead with your child; and spell out exactly what you want. ("You can go to Sophie's house, but if you change your plans and go somewhere else, call me first.")
- Choose your battles! Save the heavy-duty rules for important issues, such as safety (running across a parking lot, un-chaperoned parties) or values-related issues (unkind remarks, stealing).
- Be consistent so that your child will know you really mean what you say. Always work with your partner so that your child gets the same messages from the both of you.
- When your child misbehaves, try to understand why. What need is not being met? How could that need be met in an acceptable way?
- Children need to hear more good things about themselves than bad things. Give children a lot of attention and encouragement when they are not misbehaving. Praise them when they co-operate.
- Give your child choices and make sure that either choice is okay with you.
- Avoid threats and ultimatums ("Do it or else!").
- Try not to nag (you'll soon be "tuned out") or beg (that gives the child too much power).
- Don't bribe or make promises you can't keep. Children do not need elaborate rewards for being good.
- Expect mistakes. Help your child learn from them. ("If that happens again, what will do differently?")
- To teach children respect, talk to them respectfully - without ridicule, sarcasm, name-calling or humiliation. Be a positive role model for your child - it is the most powerful form of teaching.
- The goal of discipline is to teach children acceptable behavior. When possible, teach children what you want to see rather than punishing.
- Use consequences that are logically related to the behavior you are trying to change.
- Do make-ups. A make-up is something that people do to put themselves back into integrity with the person they broke the agreement with.

Most importantly, be willing to spend time with your child. Tune in to your child's unique temperament, needs and strengths. Build a strong parent-child relationship. Love and limits go hand in hand. Good parenting takes time and real patience!

