



# Guidance and Discipline for Skill Building Summary

## Why Discipline?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you can choose to be purposeful and deliberate in the ways you provide guidance and discipline. Approaching guidance and discipline for skill building as teachable moments to grow your child's skills can be transformational in your understanding of discipline and can enrich your relationship with your child. Children ages 5-10 are working on understanding rules and applying them in various situations. They are seeking independence and will naturally test limits and break rules. This is a normal part of their development and necessary for their learning.

**Tip** These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

**Tip** Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

## Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Ask yourself:
  - "Does my child have an unmet need?" They might need someone to listen or give them attention.
  - Ask them about how they are feeling. *"I noticed your face got really red. So, when you said unkind things to your sister, were you feeling frustrated?"*
  - Ask them about how they think others might be feeling. *"Your sister cried when you said those unkind words to her. How might she be feeling?"*
- Use your best listening skills! Paraphrase what you heard your child say. A conversation might go something like this:
  - Child: "When my brother stepped on my foot, I got so mad that I hit him."
  - Parent modeling paraphrasing: *"So, I hear that when your brother stepped on your foot, you responded by hitting him and breaking a house rule."*
  - If you hear a subtext of feeling, as in this example, you can also reflect back the feeling implied. Parent reflecting feeling: *"I hear you were mad. Were your feelings hurt too when he stepped on you?"*
- Explore the mind-body connection. Ask: *"How does your body feel now?"* See how descriptively they can list their physical signs of wellbeing. Now ask: *"How does your body feel when you are angry?"* Find out how your child feels and make the connection between those symptoms and the normal feelings they are having.

**Trap** Avoid letting the question turn into an accusation. Remember to stay calm and that the goal of the question is to help the child uncover feelings.

**Tip** Write your hopes down together. Then write your rules on a separate sheet. Keep them simple and brief, 3-5 short statements only.

## Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Teach your child positive behaviors. Ask the question: *“What helps you feel better when you’re sad, mad, or hurt?”*
- Teach positive ways to ask for attention. Consider: “How can my child learn to seek my attention in acceptable ways?” Then, actively teach those kinds of attention-getting behaviors.
- Model assertive communication through “I-messages”: *“I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (insert feeling word) when you \_\_\_\_\_ (name the words or actions that upset you) because (state the impact) \_\_\_\_\_.”*
- Begin to teach your child to repair harm.
- End the day with love.
- Work on your family feelings vocabulary.
- Create a calm down space.

**Tip** Create a ritual of sharing words of love and care at bedtime. Consider that ending the day reflecting on how much you appreciate one another could just be the best way to send your child off to sleep.

**Tip** When you are reflecting on your child’s feelings, you can think about unpacking a suitcase. Frequently, there are layers of feelings that need to be examined and understood not just one. Anger might just be the top layer. After you’ve discovered why your child was angry, you might ask about other layers. Was there hurt or a sense of rejection involved? Perhaps your child feels embarrassed? Fully unpacking the suitcase of feelings will help your child feel better understood by you as they become more self-aware.

**Tip** Create a nonverbal signal you each can use to gain each other’s attention. So often, a parent is on the phone, across the store, or heavily embroiled in a conversation with a neighbor. One example of a nonverbal signal is to hold up your high five showing you need five more minutes and then you’ll respond. Practice using it and then be sure and follow up with your child after five minutes so that they discover success with the signal.

## Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Accept feelings. *“I hear you’re upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better? Would your calm down space help you feel better?”*
- Use “Show me...” statements. *“Show me how you can ask for attention.”*
- Offer limited and authentic choices. *“Do you want to do your homework sitting at the kitchen counter or at the dining room table?”*
- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements. *“I notice how you used our ‘wait five minutes’ hand signal. It worked! That’s excellent!”*
- Practice deep breathing.
- Follow through on repairing harm.

- Include reflection on the day in your bedtime routine. Ask: *“What happened today that made you happy?”* or *“What were the best moments in your day?”*

#### Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions. *“You are going to see Julie today. Do you remember what you can do to assert your feelings?”*
- Learn about development.
- Promote an “I can” belief.
- Foster friendships.
- Stay engaged. Working together on ideas for trying out new and different coping strategies can help offer additional support and motivation for your child when tough issues arise.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

#### Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes. *“I noticed when you got frustrated with your homework, you moved away and took some deep breaths. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs as ways to appreciate one another.

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