

# GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE FOR SKILL BUILDING

## Testing Limits and Breaking Rules Is a Normal Part of Your Child's Development

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you can choose to be purposeful and deliberate in providing guidance and discipline in a way that allows for teachable moments that support your child's development.

### Guidance and Discipline for Skill Building Is Different Than Punishment

- Some parents feel punishment is the only way their child will understand that their behavior was inappropriate
- But, when a child is punished, they often feel scared, humiliated, and hurt
- This overwhelming sense of fear or hurt causes a child to have a fight, flight, or freeze reaction and not to be able to focus on whatever you are trying to teach them
- The child is likely to miss the lesson you want to emphasize entirely, feel unsafe, and lose trust in you
- Guidance and discipline for skill building uses teachable moments to grow your child's skills, which can be transformational in your understanding of discipline and can enrich your relationship with your child
- Each time a child chooses an unsafe or inappropriate behavior is an opportunity to teach a vital life skill and cultivate a sense of responsibility

Guidance and discipline for skill building means helping your child understand their feelings and grow new skills and behaviors to replace unsafe or inappropriate ones.



# Ways to Support Guidance and Discipline for Skill Building

## Identify your child's unmet needs and their feelings

- Big feelings might be influencing your child's behavior
- Look past the behavior to the feelings that may be influencing the behavior
- There may be multiple layers of feelings
- There are no “bad” feelings – every feeling is a vital message interpreting the world around them

## Model the Skills

- Children learn skills by watching and learning from others' behavior
- You are a constant role model for your child
- Be open about times you make mistakes and how you learn and grow from them
- Mistakes can be pathways to learning for both of you

## Focus on Decision Making

- Be curious about how your child makes decisions
- Ask about their thought process and the outcome

## Intentionally Practice

- High stress times are difficult for maintaining self-awareness and expressing empathy
- These skills must be practiced consistently, so they feel natural and are accessible when needed, particularly in the high-stress situations

Children and teens are empowered when they have the skills to responsibly manage their lives, their emotions, and their relationships.

**Learn more at [ParentingMontana.org](https://parentingmontana.org)**