

## **Steps to More Effective Discipline**

**1. Ask the question “Whose problem is it?”** Determine the answer by two indicators,

- a) who has the highest emotional level?
- b) who is moving toward whom?

If you are angry and following your child/youth around the problem is yours. . . time to express and possibly discipline. If your child/youth is approaching you and is upset, chances are the problem is theirs. . . time to reflectively listen, explore alternatives and support. (Don’t jump in and solve the problem for them, learn to support without stealing their experience)

**2. Ask if the child/youth’s behavior is really misbehavior or just inappropriate behavior.**

Misbehavior has 3 components that differentiate it from inappropriate or “trying on” behavior.

- a) occurs in a pattern, repeats
- b) breaks an agreement, rule, norm, law, etc
- c) bothers you

**3. If you determine the behavior is just inappropriate behavior you may want to IGNORE, teach or talk with the child/youth about it.** Ignoring is usually the best choice because the chances of reinforcing the behavior are minimized.

**4. If you determine that the behavior is actually misbehavior then you may want to consciously choose either natural or logical consequences. The following steps may be helpful.**

### **FOR LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES:**

A) **be assertive with an I - statement** or other message that doesn’t USE anger, shame, guilt etc. You can be very direct without emotionally leveraging the child/youth.

B) **WAIT** (this will vary depending on the behavior)

C) if the behavior persists then you may want to use **logical consequences**.

**Give a choice, such as,**

**“Do you want to. . . (insert desired behavior). . . or . . . (insert the consequence).”** An example might be, “Do you want to be home by the agreed upon curfew time or would you like to lose the use of the car for a few days?”

D) to be effective the consequence MUST have 3 components

- 1) must be logically linked to the behavior
- 2) must be enforceable
- 3) must have impact

If all three components are present your chances of being effective skyrocket. . . if you are experiencing a lack of effectiveness you are probably missing one or more of the components.

### **FOR NATURAL CONSEQUENCES:**

You allow others/nature to teach your child. This works well when it really isn’t your business or you don’t want to stir in elements of a power struggle between you and your child.