

CHILD GUIDANCE AND SELF CONTROL

Effective guidance comes from having clear, consistent and realistic expectations of children. Children are observant little sponges and they will imitate what they see and experience, therefore it is important that parents and teachers role model effective coping skills. It is also important that the consistency of discipline extends between home and school. When there is a lack of consistency with limit setting and follow through or a gap of what kinds of behaviors are expected from the child between home and school, children may become confused and act out further to seek the limits that help them feel safe.

What We Do:

At Jenny Hart, we strive to prevent behavior problems by having clear consistent limits, help children solve problems and make choices, help children to see the consequences of their actions, reward appropriate behavior with genuine words of praise and positive interactions, redirect children from potential problems, evaluate the classroom environment, and as a last resort remove the child from the environment, which is used to help the child regain their self-control as well as to keep themselves, other children and teachers safe. We encourage children to use their words to solve problems, follow through on set limits and provide consequences that relate to the behavior. We know your child did not come with a user's guide, feel free to come to us at anytime if you need resources regarding parenting and/or discipline books or classes.

What They Do:

To some degree we want children to act out, this gives us teachable moments to guide children and help them understand how to be a good friend and what "good choices" look like. Children act out for many reasons including changes to their environment such the birth of a new baby, visiting family members, moving to a new home, starting a new school as well as parental discord or separation, illness or death of a family member or pet. We encourage you to discuss any changes at home with your child's teachers so we can help your child adjust and cope, give them extra hugs and attention, find books or resources for you and better understand outbursts or other untypical behavior, including becoming unusually withdrawn. You may think you're child doesn't know what's going on, but they can sense stress, tension and anxiety during difficult situations. Children want limits and they need limits so that they know what to expect and to feel safe. A child without limits is like driving a car without lines in the road to guide you where to go. Children also test the limits, it's their job. It's the adult's job to remain consistent and help the child understand the limits and learn responsibility even if the child has to be uncomfortable while experiencing a consequence. It's okay to say "No".

"Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it." Proverbs 22:6

What You Can Do:

First, take a look at yourself and understand what your expectations are. What behaviors and values do you want your child to embrace as they grow and develop into an adult? What kinds of behaviors push your buttons? What is acceptable or unacceptable to you?

DO:

- Set age appropriate limits that are realistic. **FOLLOW THROUGH** on set consequences. If you don't follow through, it is useless to set the limit in the first place.
- Children have little control over their lives, they want to feel powerful and in control, so it is important to give them *limited* choices. "Do you want to wear the green shirt or the red shirt?"
- If your child hurts someone, ask your child what she thinks she can do to help the person feel better.
- Try to choose rewards in "time spent". Such as another book at bedtime, special mommy and/or daddy alone time, a trip to their favorite place, a picnic in the backyard, bicycle rides, play time with special friends, choosing the flowers to plant in the backyard, etc.
- Use "I" messages: "I need you to stop crying, it is hurting my ears", "It's time to go, I need you to put that away and come with me please"

DON'T:

- ... Offer a choice that you have no intention of providing or following through on, such as "if you don't stop crying, we'll go to the car" unless you really "go to the car".
- Don't give the child choices that are for adults to make such as "do you want to go to school today?" This creates the opposite effect and gives the child full control.
- Don't force a child to say "sorry". It is ineffective because often times they are not sorry. Showing the child that their actions hurt another friend and helping the friend to feel better develops the sense of empathy and helps the child understand the consequences of their actions as they begin to develop a sense of responsibility. If they truly feel sorry and they are ready to, they can express it.
- Stay away from using "good girl" or "bad boy". We want children to understand that they, themselves, are not "bad" or "good", it is the choices that they make that define them.
- Stay away from using "only food" as a reward. You can go to get a favorite food together, but just handing over candy or food in the car or at home is meaningless and although you might elicit an immediate change, it does not help the child learn in an effective or healthy way.
- Never ask if your child is "ready" to go when it is "time" to go, or say "okay?" at the end of your sentence. Never ask a question you don't want to hear the answer to! ☺

YOU ARE THE ADULT, YOU ARE THE PARENT :)

Handling Difficult and Challenging Behaviors

Should it become evident that a child's difficult behavior becomes challenging and is not correcting or we feel the child may need additional assistance in controlling their behavior, the directors along with the teachers and parents will meet to discuss a plan of action that may include providing the family with resources, referrals or other alternate courses of action, including removal from JHEEC so the child can be a more conducive environment. This explains our steps of action.

