

EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

It's 5:30 in the afternoon. Your dinner is burning on top of the stove, someone is at the door, and your husband just called to let you know he won't be coming home until very late. All of the sudden, a loud crash is heard coming from the family room. You rush in just in time to see your three year old son, Tommy, picking up the rubber ball that you told him a million times was for outside play only! Sound familiar? It's just another situation when you are raising children, in which you have to decide on how to discipline effectively. Sadly, most people confuse effective discipline with punishment, which often consists of threats, yelling, overreaction, put downs and spanking.

Spanking is one popular method of discipline because it serves the purpose of relieving parent's anger. But, the message that gets passed on to children is "if you're bigger, it's okay to get your way by hitting someone smaller". Even though spanking may temporarily stop the negative behavior, it loses its effectiveness over time, and may even teach children to be afraid of their parents. So then, what exactly is effective discipline? According to author Don Dinkmeyer et. al., the purpose of effective discipline is to teach a learning process or guide children to be responsible and cooperative.

The following methods can be used to discipline children effectively:

- *Distracting the child
- *Ignoring the misbehavior when appropriate
- *Structuring the environment
- *Controlling the situation, not the child
- *Involving the child through choices and consequences
- *Planning time for loving
- *Letting go
- *Increasing your consistency
- *Noticing positive behavior
- *Excluding the child with a time to think (formerly known as "time out")

Now go back to the example with Tommy and the ball. Using the formula above, plot out a plan that would utilize the effective techniques listed. Remember, the goal of discipline is not just to punish and reward, but to guide children to develop self-discipline.