

**November  
2008**

*Tuscarawas County Job & Family Services  
Post-Adoption Link Newsletter*

**NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH**



*History: In May 1976, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis issued the first state Adoption Week proclamation, and President Ford then officially proclaimed the week in a letter to the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) Conference held later that year. As years went on, Adoption Week came to be observed during the week of Thanksgiving.*

*In 1990, NACAC decided to expand opportunities for raising awareness and began advertising Adoption Week as National Adoption Awareness Month (November). The idea has quickly caught on, and Adoption Month has been celebrated since.*

***TCJFS encourages all adoptive families to CELEBRATE being an adoptive family during the month of November!***

(Page 2 of this issue suggests ways to celebrate.)

**Inside this Issue:**

National Adoption Month	Cover
Newsletters on Line	Cover
Adoption Activities	2
Conference	3
Holidays Article	4
Stealing Article	5
Resources & Frequently Asked Questions	6
Building Blocks of Discipline Article	7-12

**PLEASE NOTE**

**This will be the last issue mailed to all of our families/community providers.**

**You will now be able to view or download the TCJFS Post-Adoption Link Newsletter at our agency's Web site: [www.tcjfs.org](http://www.tcjfs.org) Click on Adoption/Foster Care, then on the top bar, Newsletters.**

**If you still want to receive a TCJFS Post-Adoption Link Newsletter by mail, please call Dorothy at 330-339-7791, ext. 170.**

**Eventually, all of our past issues since 2002 will be available on our Web site.**

## A Month of Adoption Activities (30 days of ideas)

1. Kick off Adoption Month by distributing adoption-theme posters or flyers.
2. Sign up for a November adoption conference or call your agency to find out about Adoption Month events that are open to the public.
3. Visit a restaurant, exhibit, or event that celebrates a family member's ethnic or cultural background.
4. Donate time or money to your favorite adoption, foster care, or child welfare organization.
5. Light candles at your dinner table or in your place of worship to honor children waiting for adoptive homes.
6. Hold an art night for your children or at your parent support group meeting. Ask children to create images of a family.
7. Visit your public library's adoption-related book collection. Suggest additional volumes they should acquire.
8. Befriend a teenager who is aging out of foster care—become a mentor or offer a place to go on holidays.
9. Write down your family's adoption story. Add it to your lifebook, submit it to a newspaper, or post it online
10. Learn positive adoption language, then teach your extended family.
11. Make a lifebook page about your child's past year. If your child doesn't have a lifebook, make this the first page.
12. Create a new family tradition: attend a sporting event, take a hike, visit a science museum, or eat a special dinner.
13. Let a media outlet know that you appreciate its past attention to adoption and look forward to continued coverage of the issue.
14. Rent a video or read a book that spurs discussion about the meaning and importance of family.
15. Write or visit a newly-elected official to share basic information about policies that affect adoptive families.
16. Write a letter to your child's birth family (even if you cannot send it). Let your child contribute questions, sentiments, artwork, and photographs.
17. Take an annual family photo. Reflect as you compare it to previous photos and guess about what the coming year may bring.
18. Invite a fellow adoptive or foster family whom you don't know well to dinner. Consider getting to know a family whose adoption story is markedly different from your own (for example, if you adopted from foster care, get to know an international adopter).
19. With permission from your child, visit his/her classroom to make a presentation about adoption.
20. Give a teenager in foster care a gift certificate for a hair cut, new shoes, night at the movies, or tickets to a sporting event.
21. Spend an hour surfing adoption sites on the Internet. Download useful information for your parent group or child's teacher.
22. Adopt a cat, dog, hamster, fish, or plant. Teach your children that living things need care and nurturing to help them grow.
23. With your children's help, make cards for extended family members, letting them know that during Adoption Month you celebrate their role in your family.
24. Buy holiday gifts for foster children who are waiting for an adoptive family.
25. Send a letter of appreciation to someone who has supported your family through or after the adoption process.
26. Ask your faith community leader to hold a special service in honor of children.
27. Host an adoption orientation at your home. Invite family and friends who would make good parents to listen to a presentation by agency staff.
28. Call a family who is waiting for an adoptive placement to let them know that you remember the challenge of waiting and are thinking of them.
29. Ask your agency if you can send holiday cards to foster children during December.
30. End Adoption Month by reflecting with your family on all that you've done to celebrate and by making plans to continue your observances throughout the year.

*Reprinted from 2003 Post-Adoption Link*

**Building Healthy Attachments . . .**  
**Adoption Conference in Wheeling, West Virginia,**  
**Oglebay Resort**

**DATE:** November 24 and 25, 2008  
**REGISTRATION:** Call Michele Santin at 740-282-3631 OR  
 E-mail her at [msantin@diosteub.org](mailto:msantin@diosteub.org)  
**COST:** \$60 for 1 day OR \$90 for both days

**Optional Dinner Meeting With Dr. Keck**  
**Monday Evening, November 24**  
**Cost: \$39**

### Conference Schedule

#### Monday, November 24, 2008

Morning Session	Lori L. Beyer, MSW	Working With Survivors of Trauma
Afternoon Session	Lori L. Beyer, MSW	Non-traditional Parenting Interventions

#### Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Morning Session	Denise St. Clair, MSW	Ethics in Child Placement Decisions
Afternoon Session	Arleta James, MS, PCC	Brothers and Sisters in Adoption: Helping Children Navigate Relationships

**OR**

Morning Session	Greg Keck, Ph.D.	Parenting the Hurt Child
Afternoon Session	Lois Hall, MS	How Grief Recovery Can Help Our Children

## **HOLIDAYS MEAN MORE THAN HEARTBURN FRUSTRATED PARENTS CAN REIGN KIDS IN WITH CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE**

**By Jim Fay**

Every parent has dreaded one family get together or another. Whether it's a birthday party, Thanksgiving dinner, or a New Year's celebration, we've all seen situations where youngsters have become the center of attention at the expense of everyone else's enjoyment. A child becomes so out of control or demanding that people begin to think, "Oh, great. Here we go again. Why can't his parents do something about this? We didn't come here for this!" Others are embarrassed for the parents, thinking, "Thank God that's not my child." In most cases, the parents themselves are embarrassed but not sure what to do to regain control. A few simple Love and Logic® guidelines can help parents stop this potential nightmare and make holiday get-togethers joyous occasions where kids and parents all have a good time.

### **Kids quickly recognize a parent's reluctance to handle discipline in "public."**

Don't fall into this trap. A child's radar picks up on parental insecurity and rushes in to capitalize on a chance to do things that are not acceptable: "Mom isn't going to discipline me here. Now I can finally get my way. People are going to know I'm here and in control. Watch me!"

### **Family and friends appreciate a willingness to provide loving discipline.**

They know about kids and how they should behave. Most will not criticize you for taking some time to deal with misbehavior, but many will look down on you if you don't live up to your parental duty.

### **Excuse yourself while handling the situation.**

I remember a dad who had his misbehaving two-year-old sit at his feet during dinner. The child screamed and carried on while dad calmly addressed those at the table with, "Excuse us. As you can see, we are having a little situation. I'm sure you all understand." And they all did. Later several relatives told him how proud they were of him for being willing to deal with his child in a calm, loving manner.

### **When kids cause a problem, hand it back to them.**

This is an important Love and Logic rule. For example, if a child starts whining about sharing a particular toy or the lack of pizza on the dinner menu, don't rush in and save the child. Instead, try: "Thanks for bringing that to my attention, I know it can be frustrating. Please let me know how it works out." Many children quickly learn to solve their own problems rather than bringing everything to Mom or Dad.

### **Hold a Love and Logic Strategic Training Session.**

Two parents I know made plans to use their next family gathering as a learning opportunity after an especially bad experience. Mom and Dad secretly hired their youngster's least-favorite baby-sitter to follow them to their family visit. The baby-sitter waited in her car. As soon as the child started acting up, the parents called her on the cell phone.

Moments later there was a knock at the front door ... and you can guess who was there. She took the misbehaving — and very surprised — child home and made him go to his own room. The child paid the baby-sitter out of his own allowance. This kind of training session sends a powerful message: Children are responsible for their own actions, and you are expected to behave the same in public as at home. The problem was handed back to the person who caused it, and he was on his best behavior at the next family celebration. Kids who have loving limits learn to love themselves. This child — and yours — will have a much better time during the holidays and throughout the year when discipline is consistent, logical, and provided with love.

Jim Fay is president and cofounder of the Love and Logic® Institute in Golden, Colo., and coauthor of the best-selling book, *Parenting with Love and Logic*. For more information about Love and Logic parenting and teaching techniques, call **1-800-LUV-LOGIC** or visit [www.loveandlogic.com](http://www.loveandlogic.com).

# Stealing

*By Terrence J. Koller, Ph. D., The Theraplay Institute, Chicago*

Children steal for a variety of reasons. For some it is for excitement, a challenge, a symbol of status among their peers. For others, it is a "stage" most frequently seen in the toddler who does not have a clear sense of what belongs to him or her. Stealing occurs again around the age of seven and still later in early adolescence. At these stages the child feels lonesome, distant from his or her parents, and self-conscious. Stealing here represents a blind craving that must be satisfied. The stolen object substitutes for the stimulation once provided by a parent who must gradually be left behind.

No matter the reason, adult reaction is universally shock and fright. Parents wonder where they went wrong and how it could happen in their family. They feel that they are under the microscope with all eyes questioning their child-rearing ability. Teachers worry that it may signal future anti-social behavior. All want the stealing to stop. Foster and older adoptive children are likely to steal. Separation from their original parent(s) no matter how bad they were, stuns the child into returning to an earlier level of relating to loved ones. A child does not handle loss like an adult who mourns. Instead, the child seeks immediate reduction of pain and a return to a pleasurable state. The child becomes greedy and insatiable. He or she sucks bites, rocks, spits and hits. No matter what the child's chronological age, his or her needs are those of a much younger child.

When a child's natural loved one becomes unavailable, he or she redirects his or her normal clinging behavior to substitute inanimate objects. If children have good foundations of closeness to their parents, they use a blanket or toy as a substitute for the security they feel with a parent, only then can they temporarily relinquish their parent and maintain peace of mind.

Foster and adoptive children do not have this foundation of closeness. Thus they either have no "security blanket" or it gives them no more comfort than does the original parent from whom they were removed. Thus they "steal" items belonging to their "new parents", a friend, or the teacher. Sometimes they "steal" items which remind them of these important people. Frequently these "stolen" objects appear worthless and not needed, making it difficult for adults to understand why they were taken.

Adults must, of course, respond to the child's stealing episode. The following guidelines should serve as a base when you confront the child about the incident:

- Don't make it easy for the child to lie.
- Be firm. Be crystal clear that stealing is not permitted.
- Insist on returning the stolen object or on retribution if returning is not possible.
- Do not humiliate the child. It makes him or her feel worse and increases the likelihood of recurrence.
- Use every opportunity to give the child physical affection (pats, hugs, arms around his or her shoulder).
- In school, do special projects which the child can take with him or her.
- Help the child make good friends.
- If still worried, consult an expert who is experienced with foster and adoptive children.

Keywords:

behavior: stealing

emotions and development: regression

emotions and development: emotional reasons for behaviors

Reprinted with permission from FAIR  
(Families Adopting in Response)  
P.O. Box 51436, Palo Alto, CA 94303  
[www.fairfamilies.org](http://www.fairfamilies.org)

**ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES**

<a href="http://www.childwelfare.gov">http://www.childwelfare.gov</a>	Child Welfare Information Gateway
<a href="http://www.adopt.org/assemble/home.html">http://www.adopt.org/assemble/home.html</a>	National Adoption Center
<a href="http://www.adoptnet.org">http://www.adoptnet.org</a>	Information, Resources, and Support
<a href="http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/index.php">http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/index.php</a>	Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute
<a href="http://www.davethomasfoundation.org">http://www.davethomasfoundation.org</a>	Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
<a href="http://www.adopting.com">http://www.adopting.com</a>	Internet Adoption Resources
<a href="http://www.our-kids.org">http://www.our-kids.org</a>	Resources for Adults Raising Kids

**ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

<a href="http://www.attachmentdisorder.net">http://www.attachmentdisorder.net</a>	Information and Resources About Attachment Disorder
<a href="http://www.bpkids.org/site/PageServer">http://www.bpkids.org/site/PageServer</a>	Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation
<a href="http://www.chadd.org">http://www.chadd.org</a>	Children & Adults With ADD/ADHD
<a href="http://www.attention.com">http://www.attention.com</a>	Information on ADD/ADHD
<a href="http://www.nami.org">http://www.nami.org</a>	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
<a href="http://specialchildren.about.com">http://specialchildren.about.com</a>	Parenting Special Needs Children
<a href="http://www.our-kids.org">http://www.our-kids.org</a>	Raising Special Kids With Special Needs

**Frequently Asked Questions****Q: What should I consider when seeking a therapist who is sensitive to adoption issues?**

**A:** Finding the right therapist can seem like a daunting task, especially when parents may be feeling overwhelmed or burdened by the difficulties for which they are seeking help. At minimum, a therapist must:

- Be knowledgeable about adoption and the psychological impact of adoption on children and families;
  - Be experienced in working with adopted children and their families; and
- Know the various types of help available.

Our agency is always available to assist you in accessing local resources.

(Reprinted from 2/02 Post-Adoption Link)

**Q: What is Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS)?**

**A:** PASSS is a unique subsidy designed to assist Ohio families after adoption finalization. To qualify, an adopted child must have developed a special need which existed prior to the adoption finalization or the child's special need can be attributed to a pre-adoptive condition. PASSS is intended to pay for essential medical or psychological services which cannot be covered under other community resources, insurance programs, or other subsidies and the cost of the needed service is beyond your ability to provide.

For more information, please contact your adoption staff at Tuscarawas County Job and Family Services (TCJFS).

(Reprinted from 5/02 Post-Adoption Link)

**Q: What should I do if my child is acting out as part of his/her struggle for separation or in an attempt to force me to reject him/her?**

**A:** Take a step back and adopt a non-blaming approach. Focus on consequences instead of berating the child. Parents find it very helpful if consequences for broken rules have been developed in a family conference prior to the misbehavior. If the parent knows how he/she will respond, the "crisis" of dealing with the problem is significantly smaller. Remember, you can change behavior, but you can't control the child's attitude.

(Reprinted from 8/03 Post-Adoption Link and the tip was from The Adoption Network, Newsletter: January 1992)

## EIGHT BUILDING BLOCKS OF DISCIPLINE

By Denise Goodman, Ph.D.

The following are eight basic concepts known as the “8 Building Blocks of Discipline.” They were developed to assist parents in implementing a behavioral management program for foster, adopted, and kin children. They are a foundation designed to guide the discipline process. They are tools that parents can use to effectively manage children’s behaviors. Of course, caregivers should strive to gain as much education and training about discipline and behavior management as possible.

<b>#8 COMMITMENT</b>			
<b>#5 SELF-ESTEEM</b>	<b>#6 PROBLEM SOLVING</b>	<b>#7 REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS</b>	
<b>#1 TRUST</b>	<b>#2 CHOICES</b>	<b>#3 CONSEQUENCES</b>	<b>#4 PARENTAL ROLE</b>

### ***Building Block #1: TRUST***

*Threats and promises must come true!!* Parents must follow through on any threat or promise made. This is critical for trust and credibility to be built between the parent and child. Most foster and adoptive children lack basic trust. Caregivers must work to nurture a trusting relationship. This relationship assists in the development of a healthy conscience. For example, many parents feel it is necessary to create a situation where the child must choose to lie or tell the truth by asking a question when the parent already knows the answer. Most special needs children are not ready for this test. They do not have a trusting relationship with the caregiver and may be fearful of telling the truth about a wrongdoing. When parents create this scenario, children feel compelled to lie. Consequently, foster/adoptive parents should not create “tests” for the child.

To develop trust in the caregiver, the child must believe in the individual. Credibility is vital for children to believe their parents will follow through. Therefore, if a parent promises to talk to a child that night, the conversation may need to take place at midnight, but at all cost - keep your promises. A parent may threaten to follow a child to school to ensure that the child is not late; the parent may need to delay going to fulfill the threat.

### ***Building Block #2: CHOICES***

*Parents should give children choices as often as possible.* This provides the child a sense of control over his/her life. Many foster and adoptive children believe they have had no control and, consequently, act out to regain power over their lives. Some parents are reluctant to let children make choices because they fear the child may make bad choices. One way to avoid this dilemma is to give children choices the parent is comfortable with. For example, “Would you like cereal or eggs for breakfast?” This gives a child a choice

but within the boundaries the parent has set. It is also important not to give a young child too many choices. For example, telling a child to pick a cereal from a grocery aisle filled with 150 different boxes may be too overwhelming. Asking a child to select one of three (picked by the parent) will eliminate potential problems. Giving a child choices can also aid in problem situations. A child can choose to comply or be given a discipline. Telling a child, “you may do your chore by 5 PM or I will pay your sister \$3.00 from your allowance to do it” will give the child a choice, get the chore done, and remove the parent from the role of “the enforcer.” The parent must be certain to follow through and remind the child it was his/her choice. Children sometimes become upset when the choice she/he made did not turn out as expected. This situation provides the parent with an excellent opportunity to teach a child about good decision-making skills, which can be utilized by the child in the future.

### **Building Block #3: CONSEQUENCES**

Many foster and adopted children came from home environments that were inconsistent and chaotic. The child may have been severely punished for a relatively minor offense or for no reason at all. On other occasions, the child may not have received any discipline for inappropriate behavior. Therefore, these children may not fully understand cause and effect and the concept of consequences for one’s actions. Foster and adoptive parents must make a concerted effort to be consistent and provide consequences for positive and negative behavior.

**There are three kinds of consequences - natural, logical, and artificial.** *Natural consequences* occur without any intervention from the parents. For example, if you don’t wear gloves on a cold day, you get cold hands; or if you spend all of your allowance on Friday, you won’t have any money to go to the movies on Saturday. Many parents are reluctant to allow their children to experience natural consequences and may intervene with threats, nagging, or intervention to prevent consequences. When parents allow their child to experience natural consequences, there is a greater likelihood of the child learning what consequences are and to take natural consequences into account when making decisions. Natural consequences also help the child to learn to be responsible for his/her behavior in the future.

Sometimes a parent cannot allow natural consequences to happen to a child. If a child runs into the street, the natural consequence would be for the child to get hit by a car. No parent would permit his or her child to be harmed. Therefore, the parent must devise *logical consequences*. These consequences are developed by the parent and are directly related to the misbehavior. For example, if the child runs in the street, a logical consequence would be for the child to be restricted to the fenced back yard or the child would not be permitted to leave the front porch for the afternoon. If a child leaves his/her bike in the driveway overnight - the logical consequence would be for the child to lose the privilege of riding the bike for a week, while natural consequences may be the theft of the bike or the bike may be accidentally run over by a car.

Some behaviors do not have a natural or logical consequence that can be employed. Therefore, the parent must set an *artificial consequence*. These consequences are

---



devised by the parent but have no direct connection to the behavior. If a child does not do his/her homework, he/she may be grounded from Friday night's football game. A child that uses foul language may be fined 25 cents for each word. The artificial consequences a parent utilizes must be planned individually for each child. While one child may feel losing phone privileges is a tough consequence, another may not be as impacted because she/he has no friends and does not use the phone at all!

***For the consequences to be effective, the parent must be consistent and follow through 100%.*** Many times, parents may feel it is easier to give in or not allow the child to experience the consequences in order to avoid dealing with the child's negative attitudes or feelings. This gives the child the impression his/her actions have no consequences or she/he has no responsibility for his/her behavior. The child may believe the parent will "rescue" him/her from difficult situations. Consequently, the child will not learn appropriate problem solving techniques, decision-making skills, or self-control.

#### **Building Block #4 PARENTAL ROLE**

When children misbehave, it may create an intense emotional response in the parent, which interferes with the parent's ability to effectively handle the behavior. Parents may overreact and inappropriately punish the child; therefore, parents must be willing to take a "time-out" and remove themselves from the situation. *The parent may need 15 minutes alone in the bathroom or in the bedroom.* The parent may need to call upon his/her spouse or support system to take over the care of the children while the parent regroups.

*During the time out, the parent should reflect on the following questions..*

1. Why is this behavior bothering me so much?
2. Is the child acting in a manner typical for his/her age?
3. Did I overreact due to illness, fatigue, or displaced anger?
4. What's the best way I can handle this situation without being punitive?
5. What's the best way I can handle this situation to help the child gain from this experience?

This "safe distance" also permits the parent to determine if not intervening and allowing the child to assume the natural consequences would be beneficial in the situation.

Parents should also consider this guideline when disciplining the child... "What am I teaching this child?" Everything parents do and don't do is observed and assimilated by the child. Therefore, if the parent gives into the child's nagging after 15 minutes, the child has learned the parent's resolve is gone after a short time and, if they can keep up the nagging, she/he is most likely to get his/her way.

Another example to consider is the child who is given a new toy to replace a toy she/he broke in anger. It may appear the parent is not teaching the child anything but, in reality, the child has learned there are no consequences for his/her tantrums and, in fact, the child is being rewarded for such behavior.

This concept also applies to the issue of spanking. When parents use physical punishment, the child may learn it is okay to use violence when displeased.

### ***Building Block #5: SELF-ESTEEM***

Foster and adoptive children frequently lack a positive self-esteem due to their traumatic histories. Parents may find it is more effective to motivate children with praise and encouragement than with threats and nagging. In addition, compliments and praise aid in the building of a positive self concept and assist the child in developing the confidence necessary to control his/her behavior. Some examples are:

- √ Ask for the child's help, opposed to telling or ordering the child.
- √ Compliment the work or effort of the child; opposed to complaining about the wrong.
- √ Catch the child being good; instead of always catching the child being bad.
- √ Spend time with children individually.

### ***Building Block #6: PROBLEM SOLVING***

*Too many times, parents assume responsibility for the child's problems and do not permit the child the opportunity to learn and utilize problem-solving skills.* These are necessary survival skills for today's youth. A typical example is the child who waits until late Sunday evening to tell a parent that a special notebook is needed for school the following day. Of course, the family had been to several stores over the weekend and the child neglected to mention the notebook. Some parents may get dressed, run out to an all night office supply store and purchase the notebook for the child - all the time being angry and resentful. Other parents would permit the child to experience the natural consequences of detention or the teacher's wrath. However, this is a golden opportunity to help the child learn and practice problem-solving skills.

The parent should calmly tell the child this not the parent's problem! The child must solve this problem on his/her own. The first step is to give the child a piece of paper to record three solutions. Some children may be delayed and may not have the ability to hypothetically think; in those instances, the parent will need to assist the child by asking questions that will cue the child through the problem-solving process step-by-step. The parent should process each solution with the child reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of each solution. This method will place the responsibility for the problem (and it's solution) with the child and teach the child important life skills. Problem solving is a great "consequence" to specific misbehaviors.

An important by-product of this interaction is the development of trust and mutual respect - two critical components of a healthy relationship.

### ***Building Block #7: REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS***

*Many parents have high and unrealistic expectations for their child.* This results in constant conflict as the parent is

---

constantly correcting the child. Every misbehavior does not warrant a discipline. Parents must accept that kids do “kid things” like spill drinks at meals, leave toys on the floor, and resist going to bed. Parents should devise ways to manage these typical behaviors in a proactive and creative way. For example, every child can be given a safety cup with a lid or assigned his/her own sponge at the dinner table. Parents can play a “pick-up game” or play music to encourage children to gather toys. Bedtimes can become a fun time children look forward to by reading stories or sharing one on one time with a parent.

Parents need to be on their toes at all times! To prevent problems, parents must monitor their child’s activities. This may mean “checking” on children playing in another room or confirming an adult will be present at a teen party. From time to time, parents may become suspicious with a child’s behavior, attitude, or explanation. For example, if a child who normally hates school seems anxious to go on a particular day, the parent may want to investigate the source of this new enthusiasm. Perhaps the child has a renewed interest in school, likes a new teacher, or has a boy/girlfriend. Also, the child may be involved in an inappropriate or illegal activity such as substance abuse, truancy, or fighting. Parents should act on any questions or concerns they may have.

Parents must learn that not everything is worth fighting about and must decide what is critical and what is not. This requires the parent to overlook or disregard certain behaviors the parent may find irritating. For example, a teenager is likely to keep his/her room in their own “special” way. Instead of a daily battle over room cleaning, the parent may require the room be cleaned weekly. To maintain the parent’s sanity, the child’s door can be kept closed. For parents of younger children, toys lying around can be a big headache, particularly if the parent is a tidy housekeeper. The child may be given a special play area in the basement, which will be straightened up weekly. In these two examples, the development of an alternative plan avoids constant nagging and arguments.

*Parents must also have realistic expectations for themselves.* It is impossible to be the perfect parents, and caregivers are likely to make mistakes. Too often foster/adoptive/kin caregivers expect too much of themselves and believe that they will have an answer for every situation. Using a support group or having a "buddy" family to consult with in times of need.

### ***Building Block #8: COMMITMENT***

Discipline is ineffective if the parent constantly gives in, changes the consequences, or does not follow through. Therefore, parents must be firm when imposing discipline; however, parents must also be fair and avoid over-disciplining. Some basic rules of fairness are:

- ◆ The parent should not deny or take back something the child has earned. For example, if the child was promised a pizza for improved grades and has brought home a good report card, the parent should not renege because the child acted inappropriately in an unrelated situation.
  - ◆ The parent should avoid denying the child an activity that is extremely special or a once in a lifetime opportunity. If the child has worked to earn money to pay for an educational trip, the parent should develop an alternative discipline rather than grounding the child.
-

**Caregivers cannot give up!** When parents are utilizing new discipline techniques, they frequently expect immediate results. This will not happen! What is likely to occur is an increase of inappropriate behavior on the part of the child as she/he is unsure of what is happening. For example, when a child is accustomed to getting his/her way by nagging, whining and pestering, she/he will be shocked when mom or dad does not give in. In fact, the child will intensify the nagging behavior due to desperation. Once the child recognizes that mom and dad are strong, the behavior will cease. Therefore, parents must continue to follow through with the discipline process even though it may appear to be ineffective.

*It is not uncommon for frustrated foster, adoptive or kin children to say mean things* such as , “You’re not my real mother!” or “I hate you!” This is not a real reflection on the parent but an indicator of the child’s grief and frustration. It is critical for parents to recognize no matter what substitute family the child lives with, she/he will probably act out in a way. Therefore, parents must develop methods of handling these outbursts in order to maintain his/her effectiveness. This may include validating that child’s feeling that the parent is not his/her birth parent, but the parent is an adult caring for the child at this time. The foster or adoptive parent may also choose to ignore or not react to the comment at the time it is said, but to discuss it with the child’s feelings at a later point.

Also, it is not uncommon for parents to become angry with a child as a result of actions, words, or deeds. However, *it is not appropriate or effective for the parent to maintain an angry grudge against the child.* This is counterproductive to the discipline process as it taps vital energy from the parent and removes the parent’s focus from the teaching role. Parents must learn to recommit to the child over and over again. If the child has had a bad morning, after school is another time to start over. If dinner was a disaster, bedtime is an opportunity to begin again. Commitment to the child is essential if discipline is to be successful. After all, children need love the most - when they’re acting the worst. And that takes commitment.



*Happy  
Thanksgiving!*

