

## Consequences versus Punishment

Consequences are tools used to guide a child's behavior. Consequences help children learn about the results of their behavior. While we may think of consequences as punishment, they can also be earned privileges! The consequences for following a rule is a privilege.

When misbehavior is minor, we can usually stay calm. It's big or frequent mistakes that cause upset and loss of patience. We may punish instead of teach about responsible behavior. Often, children don't clearly understand that it's their behavior that has caused the punishment.

Children learn to avoid punishment and to fear their parent's anger. Punishment given in anger may lead to thinking like, "My mom is mean!" In this case, the punishment has not helped the child learn about self control and following rules.

Help children learn that it is their behavior which controls consequences, both good and bad. Give privileges for being responsible about following rules. Take away privileges when the child isn't responsible and doesn't follow the rules.

Example: The rule - Mary picks up her toys. When she does her job say, "Great! You picked up your toys." You may invite Sarah to come and play." Mary was responsible, followed the rule, and earned a privilege. If Mary doesn't do her job say, "Since you chose to leave your toys out, you may not have company today." Mary wasn't responsible for her job and she lost the privilege.

Be sure your child can do what you expect. Also, be sure you are expecting your child to do everything she can, even if she resists. A preschooler can fold washcloths and sort socks. A 1st-grader can fold t-shirts, towels and pillowcases, and sort socks.

Encourage independence - expect your child to do everything she is capable of doing! She may not do as well as you at first. Be patient and praise good effort. Gently guide your child toward improved results. Give privileges to your responsible child.

### Pointers for Parents:

- ✓ For every rule there is a responsibility and a privilege. When the responsibility isn't met, take away the privilege.
- ✓ Avoid dealing out consequences when angry. This will help avoid harsh punishment. Wait until you feel calm.
- ✓ Be sure to praise earning privileges.
- ✓ The goal of consequences is to help children learn that they are responsible for their behavior. Harsh or punitive punishment causes the child to feel either fear or anger instead of feeling regret for their mistake.