

## **TIPS FOR FATHERS: DISCIPLINING CHILDREN**

**Fathers play an important role as disciplinarians.** It is a traditional and accepted role for men in families, though fathers and mothers both share that responsibility. Good discipline is a source of pride for a father and a source of stability for a family. Discipline is challenging: it is a great opportunity to model correct behavior, fairness and firmness. If you want to teach self-control and to be obeyed and respected, you must show self-control and be consistent. Your behavior will influence your children deeply. In particular, boys will get their sense of what being a father is all about from you.

**Children need both parents' guidance.** Usually, parents develop and agree on a set of rules for reasonable order in the household and for reasonable behavior in relationships between family members and with other people. If there is ongoing disagreement between you and your partner, children will get mixed messages and inconsistent discipline. It will not work well with them. If this is the case, get help.

**Remember that your actions speak more loudly than your words.** If you say one thing, but do another, children remember what you do. If teens are out too late at night, but you do something similar, then the message is that late hours are OK.

### **DO'S AND DON'TS**

- **Control your emotions/manage your anger:** yelling a lot, screaming, pounding tables, breaking things, making threats or hitting, may quiet children for a while, but they will see you have lost it. The message is that exploding is OK as long as you are the boss. Take time to master your feelings. If you are too angry, wait or talk it out with someone. **Many men struggle with this and learn to speak more calmly to their kids even when they're mad.** You should be able to feel pride in how you handle discipline.
- **Praise good behavior.** Try to do this once a day at least. If you can praise self-control and good judgment, your kids will develop a positive sense of themselves.
- **Set clear rules and enforce them.** It is essential to have agreements with your partner, or if you are a single parent, discuss reasonable rules with a friend or helper. If you didn't have good models when you were growing up, you may need some help to think rules through.
- **Be consistent.** If you treat something as very serious one time, but make a joke about it next time, then you are giving confusing messages that cancel each other out.
- **Do not label your child or use name-calling.** Make clear that you don't like the bad behavior, but that you love your child. Children who are seen as bad kids lose the incentive to behave.
- **Use appropriate consequences.** Time-outs and other consequences—losing TV privileges for a certain (reasonable) time, putting away a toy for a while, having extra chores, and so on—are reasonable responses to misbehavior.
- **Combine rules and limit setting with explanations.** Telling children why rules are what they are, and why they are being punished helps them learn what is and is not acceptable behavior. They will probably not agree, but a reasonable, age-appropriate explanation is important.