

# Say Yes To Discipline

For many parents, child discipline is a tricky concept to embrace -- and no wonder. Too often, discussions about discipline revolve around punishments -- scolding, time-outs or even spanking.

So we view discipline, at best, as a necessary evil.

It's time to give our views on discipline a makeover. **Discipline is a powerful and positive tool** for providing structure and encouraging achievement.

Living with discipline is a long-term, achievement-oriented path to success. Here are just a few examples:

- \* Does your child want a new bike? They'll need discipline to save money for this lofty goal.
- \* Is he or she dreaming to be the next American Idol? Not without the discipline necessary to practice.
- \* Does he or she want privileges -- a new puppy, a later curfew -- that come with good behavior? They first need to demonstrate they're disciplined enough to follow through with their actions.

This principle guides us throughout life. Even as adults, the qualities of health and happiness -- working hard, doing our best, eating right and living well -- all require self-discipline.

## So how do we get discipline?

Anyone who has tried to change a child's behavior -- or break a bad habit of their own -- knows that two things are necessary: A vision for success and enough time and patience to make improvements the right way.

We've all got plenty of goals for our children. But until they can learn the qualities of self-discipline that will enable them to reach goals on their own, parents need to both lay out the goals and pave the pathway.

That's not to say you need to turn your home into boot camp -- so when it comes to discipline let's avoid words like "strict" and "harsh." Think of discipline as a set of built-in guidelines, like the supports that keep a building straight and tall.

**Start with a vision:** If you want your child to be successful, define exactly what you mean. If you expect your child to be a good student, establish this as a family priority.

**Make it happen:** He'll bring home the homework; it's up to you to create the environment that fosters high achievement. So make sure he has enough time, enough rest, enough food, a sharp pencil and a clean table to get it done -- get the idea?

**Encourage them:** If you set high expectations, they'll surely need your support and maybe a gentle push along the way. But do be careful: nagging, pushing and harping will get you nowhere. You want to build your child's self-esteem, not damage it irreparably.

**Reward their accomplishments:** If they've reached their goals, that's cause for celebration! If they didn't make the grade, however, that's not an excuse to withhold love, affection or attention. Encourage them to do better next time and help them learn another important life skill, perseverance.

### **What can I do today?**

Taking this report to heart and rethinking your approach to child discipline is your first step! Also, take a minute to reflect upon the rules you now have in place. Do you:

**Have routines in place?** Any schoolteacher will tell you that children learn best within a safe, comfortable, structured environment. Having routines, especially when getting ready for school and going to bed, will help your child internalize the habits they need to accomplish these tasks.

**Establish clear limits?** Your child should know your expectations -- and your boundaries. They are less likely to "test your limits" if they know you have set a line that they should not cross.

**Maintain a consistent approach?** The rules should be the same, and so should the punishments. Any inconsistencies, and children are more likely to test the limits and push their boundaries.

**Offer guidance?** We all need a little help along the way! Make sure you know your child's teachers, for example, and keep the lines of communication open. Address any problems, too, that would prevent your son or daughter from learning. And never forget to aid them on their journey by praising their achievements, no matter how small.

**Set a good example?** Instead of pointing your attention to your child, take a critical assessment of yourself: Are you modeling self-discipline through your own habits, from eating and drinking to working and staying organized? While nobody's perfect, it's true that your actions speak louder than words -- and your children are watching and listening.

**Reinforce the message?** Teachers and parents are usually united in their efforts to cultivate self-discipline, but messages from popular culture -- ranging from video games to TV advertisements -- promote indulgence and excess. Even a child's extracurricular life should reflect the values you hold dear. Music lessons, team sports and martial arts are some time-tested activities that promote discipline and achievement.

**Have a plan for the future?** You should have goals and an action plan to turn your hopes for tomorrow into a reality.

We've all heard stories about the students who may have gotten straight A's in high school but dropped out of college because, when left to their own devices, they couldn't budget their time or manage their studies.

Certainly, you don't want set up your child for future failure due to their lack of discipline.

Yet it can happen. These types of examples reinforce the importance of helping a child establish and internalize self-discipline skills.

But how?

## **Consider martial arts!**

Very few activities inspire self-discipline like martial arts training. A new student starts as a white belt and gradually works their way toward the ultimate symbol of achievement, the coveted black belt.

The black belt is a sign of a martial artist's dedication, their perseverance and ability to identify and attain their goals. It is a monumental tribute to self-discipline.

Regardless of the variety of martial arts, whether it's Tae Kwon Do, Karate or Judo, etc., new students start at white belt level. As they build their skills and ability, they progress through a succession of colored belts until they reach their black belt.

At this moment, untold thousands of children are among the martial arts students training for this goal, one step at a time. They (or more specifically, their parents) know the physical, mental and emotional task before them. But thanks to the discipline they are cultivating, they are eager and enthusiastic to take on this challenge.

Why?

### **Because they have discovered the many benefits of martial arts:**

- \* Improved focus at school, leading to greater academic achievement
- \* Physical conditioning, meaning, more energy and better self-image
- \* Greater confidence, lessening a child's chances of being victimized by schoolyard bullies
- \* And, of course, a greater appreciation of the rewards that come with self-discipline!

## **We make discipline happen**

Earlier in this report, we suggested specific recommendations to positively promote discipline in your child. Here's how we cultivate discipline in martial arts schools:

- 1. We start with a vision:** We firmly believe that every student has got what it takes to achieve a black belt, as long as they can stay focused to keep on learning.
- 2. We can make it happen:** Our classes are highly structured, with drills and routines that sharpen skills. New curriculum is introduced in a way that is non-threatening, building both confidence and enthusiasm.
- 3. We encourage and motivate:** The journey to black belt is full of incentives -- students get new colored belts as they advance through the ranks. Other incentives range from stickers to elite teams and competitions.
- 4. We reward their accomplishments:** We never fail to praise. We celebrate achievements, and ultimately a student earns the rank of black belt, our ultimate symbol of discipline, excellence and goal setting.

Can you envision your child in wearing a black belt? Today it's only a dream. But as we say in martial arts classes, "a Black Belt is a White Belt who never gave up."

The martial arts community recognizes the connection between self-discipline and physical/emotional wellness. We've got the wisdom and expertise to make a difference in your child's life -- today and every day.

If you'd like to learn more about how martial arts can improve your child's self-discipline, please **contact us** and we'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.