

A woman with curly hair, wearing a green jacket, is sitting and reading a book to a young girl with curly hair, wearing a yellow dress. They are both looking at the book. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery.

# Establishing discipline with your child

**erikson**  
center for children and families

## Discipline and Your Child

- Discipline is not about punishment. It's about teaching your child appropriate behavior and self-control.
- Struggle between parents and their children is typical.
- The better we as the parents are able to handle our own feelings, the sooner our children will learn from us.
- You may need to help your child cope with their feelings first, before they can respond to limits and rules.
- Avoiding conflict deprives your child of the opportunity to grow and self-regulate.

## Eight Tips for Establishing Good Discipline

1. Clear expectations, established routines, and calm responses will help with most conflict.
2. Set rules your child can follow. If your 3-year-old can't clean up her room, she can still do it with you.
3. Focus on do rather than don't. For example, "Please put your shoes in your closet" is better than "Don't leave your shoes out."
4. Give a limited number of choices whenever possible so they can feel heard. "Do you want to eat a banana or some apple sauce?" instead of "What do you want for lunch?"
5. Notice when your child is showing behavior you are trying to promote and praise the effort.
6. Provide your child with affection, attention, and understanding as they face struggles, so they will feel you are on their side no matter what.
7. Give children plenty of notice about changes, rather than letting them know at the last minute about a business trip or a visit from grandma.
8. Protect your child from emotional intensity that is too difficult for them to manage, such as marital disagreement, angry phone conversations, TV violence, or a crisis in the news.

Prevention is the best intervention for establishing good discipline. If, despite your best efforts, your child does not seem to respond to your limits and expectations, don't delay seeking professional help.

## Contact Us

**Center for Children and Families at Erikson Institute**  
**(312) 893-7119 / [www.erikson.edu/ccf](http://www.erikson.edu/ccf)**