



Choices & Consequences: A Family Guide

Helping Kids Make It Right

Introduction

Consequences are most effective when they help children learn, not simply make them feel punished. The goal is to connect choices with outcomes, encourage responsibility, and give children a chance to repair what happened and make a better choice next time.

Every child, situation, and family is different. Use this handout as a guide rather than a rigid set of rules. Choose consequences that are reasonable, age-appropriate, and connected whenever possible to the behavior that occurred.

How to Use This Handout

When a problem comes up:

1. **Pause before reacting.** Give everyone a moment to calm down before deciding what happens next.
2. **Talk about the choice.** Help your child understand what happened, who was affected, and why the behavior was a problem.
3. **Choose a consequence that fits.** Whenever possible, connect the consequence directly to the behavior rather than automatically taking away unrelated privileges.
4. **Give your child a chance to make it right.** This might mean apologizing, cleaning up, replacing something, redoing a task, helping someone, or trying the interaction again.
5. **Start fresh.** Once the consequence is complete, avoid continuing to lecture or bringing the mistake up repeatedly. The goal is to learn, to repair, and to move forward.

Remember: Consistency matters, but flexibility does too. The best consequence is not always the biggest one, it is the one that helps your child understand the impact of their choice and practice a better response next time.

1. **Pause & Reset:** Take a short break to calm down.
2. **Try Again:** Redo the interaction using respectful words or behavior.
3. **Repair It:** Apologize, replace something damaged, clean up a mess, or help the person affected.
4. **Lose a Related Privilege:** If the problem involves a device, game, outing, etc., temporarily pause that privilege.
5. **Family Contribution:** Do an extra, reasonable household task, not as humiliation or hours of punishment, but to contribute and reconnect.
6. **Talk It Through:** What happened? What were you feeling? What could you do differently next time?
7. **Make a Plan:** Agree on what happens if the same behavior occurs again.