

# February notes from the Healthy Family Healthy Child Project

By Mark Kimball, Project Manager

In November, I discussed discipline in this space and introduced the subject of natural and logical consequences. As so often happens in this article, it seems I have just barely provided readers with a concept and have not given you enough details to consider. I would like to rectify that and offer an expanded discussion of this subject as it's one that is dear to my heart.

Consequences are what influence most of what we do. Unpleasant outcomes usually keep us from repeating the same decision.

Consequences are what help us become responsible people. We do the right things because we don't like the outcomes if we don't. If we make bad choices and experience no bad outcomes, we learn nothing and continue to make the bad choices.

Giving kids consequences for misbehaviors typically comes pretty naturally to parents. Deciding what consequences are appropriate, however, can be a more difficult decision.

Creating fair, age-appropriate consequences that actually teach a lesson rather than just cause discomfort can take some creativity and thought. These are precisely the two states of mind, however, that people have difficulty entering into while they are upset or angry. For this reason, it's better for parents to think up consequences in advance, before misbehaviors occur, rather than try to do it when upset.

Effective consequences will tend to be ones that naturally follow from the misbehavior or are logically related to the misbehavior. Naturally or logically connected consequences mimic the way consequences actually work in the real world and therefore make intuitive sense to children.

True natural consequences are automatic and unpleasant outcomes that happen as a direct result of kids' choices. Parents don't have to brainstorm these consequences; they just happen.

For example, when older children regularly leave their bicycle outside it might be stolen, hit by an adult driving down the highway or get rusty from the rain. As a result, children lose the ability to ride their bikes because they are ruined or lost. Children then will learn to take care of their bicycles and their property.

Being exposed to natural consequences of misbehaviors (rather than being protected from them) helps children learn how to think through the likely consequences of their actions. This is the major love-motivated purpose of disciplining children in the first place, so they will grow up to be self-guiding, effective adults.

Natural consequences can be very effective teachers. I would suggest, however, that the use of natural consequences can be dangerous if not used with common sense. It's more important to keep children safe from harm than to teach them lessons.

Parents always should evaluate the possible outcomes of allowing a natural consequence to happen. Let me use an extreme example. Letting a child get hit by a car when he runs into the street is never an acceptable type of natural consequence (even though it's likely to teach surviving children to stay on the sidewalk in the future).

Obviously, running into the street is a very extreme example, but parents need to keep kids' safety in mind at all times, even when consequences are less deadly.

Logical consequences are artificial (not direct or automatic, but rather, imposed) consequences that parents create and enforce in order to teach children important lessons about choices and behaviors. Logical consequences need to be related, respectful and reasonable.

Related means the consequence is connected to the child's behavior and its function. Consequences also need to be given with empathy and in a respectful tone of voice.

When a child is not treated respectfully, he or she may become aggressive, passive, resentful or uncooperative. We as adults and parents demand respect from our children. What better way to teach respect than to show it?

Reasonable refers to consequences that are fair and appropriate to the situation and the child's age. Therefore, the consequence should be related to the misbehavior, respectful of the child's feelings and not too severe for the misbehavior.

If parents follow these guidelines, their children are more likely to learn how to make responsible decisions and become capable, caring adults.

Often, removing a privilege connected with misbehavior can be a powerful consequence. Being able to indulge in privileges is rewarding and pleasant for children. It is aversive for children to not be able to engage in their favorite privileges.

Children remember the unpleasantness of the consequence and their desire to not experience this unpleasantness again reinforces their ability to make the right choice in the future. For instance, when a young child refuses to eat any vegetables at dinner, a logical consequence can be that the child doesn't get the special dessert treat mom baked that day.

Whether using a natural or logical consequence, parents should simply and briefly explain the consequence to their kids and not allow themselves to get drawn into an argument or debate. Should children not respond to the parents' communication of consequences and mend their ways, parents must follow through and deliver the consequences all of the time.

If parents forget, back down or don't follow through with the consequence as promised even just a few times, children will learn that consequences are not real (or at least can be manipulated) and this knowledge will double their efforts to misbehave again in the future because they will think they can get away with the misbehavior.

Remember - it's better to prevent problems than deal with them after they have happened. When it comes to our children, we should have pre-set consequences already in mind. This makes it easier to enforce when you need to do so.

Despite the kids knowing what will happen if they misbehave, they will misbehave. It's human nature to resist someone telling us what to do. But there must be outcomes to poor choices. Consequences are not always punishment.

Logical consequences are often confused with punishment. Punishment is

an aversive consequence for wrongdoing. These aversive consequences inflict pain or other unpleasant outcomes that can be harmful to the child.

The key difference between logical consequences and punishment goes back to the idea that consequences should be related, respectful and reasonable. While a consequence may at times "feel" punitive, the way the parent presents it to the child and its relation to the inappropriate behavior is what distinguishes it from aversive punishment. The table found below summarizes the differences:


Logical Consequences	Punishment
Teach	Controls
Leave the child with feelings of control	Leaves the child feeling powerless
Make use of thinking words	Often uses fighting words
Provide choices with firm limits	Demands compliance
Are given with empathy	Is often given with anger
Are tied to the time, place of the infraction	Is often arbitrary
Are never used to get revenge	May be used to get revenge
Teach children to take responsibility for their actions	Results in children focusing on the adult delivering the punishment rather than on their actions


Natural and logical consequences work best if the child is told what will happen if a rule is broken. The parent explains the reasons for the rules and consequences and the child is given a choice. The parent, however, has to be willing to accept the child's decision and enforce the consequence when needed.

Additionally, the parent needs to let the rules be in charge; it should not become a personal struggle. If the child feels the rules are not fair, the parent and child should sit down and talk about the rules at a later date. Together, they may decide to change some rules or consequences.

Consequences work best when they are agreed upon in advance. Family meetings provide a good opportunity to agree upon the future consequences of failing to do chores, missing curfews, fighting or breaking family rules. While it's not possible to anticipate every behavior, the more parents discuss their expectations, rules and consequences in advance, the more receptive the child will be to understanding and following them.

Parents also should elicit the child's opinion on the rules and consequences. By participating in creating rules and consequences, the child's sense of responsibility will be strengthened as will his or her self-discipline.


U.S. Department of Energy  
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy


**Sandia National Laboratories**

Tribal Energy Program - Summer Internship Program

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**Application Postmarked: February 18, 2011**

**Location: Sandia National Laboratories  
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**Internship Duration: 12 weeks**

**Apply to:**  
 Sandra K. Begay-Campbell  
 Sandia National Laboratories  
 PO Box 5800  
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87185  
 Telephone: (505) 844-5418  
 skbegay@sandia.gov

**Background:** The Tribal Energy Program promotes tribal energy self-sufficiency, economic development and employment on tribal lands through the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

**Eligibility:** Current college upper-classmen and graduate students, who are familiar with Native American culture and tribal issues, are needed to support the Tribal Energy Program efforts with technical project tasks. Students are needed to assist a cross-disciplinary team to perform specific tasks. Interactions will be with Sandia's renewable energy staff, Native American tribes interested in renewable systems and Sandia's American Indian Outreach Committee. Instant immersion in these activities is offered in working directly with experienced and internationally recognized peers. Travel will be required, including field visits to renewable energy projects.

**Required:** As authorized by the Tribal Energy Program, the student applicant must be a US Citizen and be a Native American as defined as a member of a recognized Federally-recognized Tribe, Alaska Village or Alaska Corporation (not state-recognized, not bands or groups, or first peoples of Guam or Hawaii). Specific interest in renewable energy is required.  
**NOTE: Applicants must pass a pre-employment security check (local & federal law enforcement, driver's history, personal references, educational, credit & employment checks).**

**Application Instructions:**

- ✓ Apply to contact address listed at the top of the announcement prior to the deadline.
- ✓ Apply using a personal resume including GPA (3.2 Bachelors, 3.5 Masters, 3.7 PhD) and all relevant work experience and outside activities. Include your phone number & email address.
- ✓ Include all college transcripts (official copies are required).
- ✓ Complete the questionnaire included with this announcement.

**Salary & Relocation Expenses:**

- Salary commensurate with number of hours completed by the end of the 2010 Fall semester in an appropriate technical major
- Sandia will pay relocation expenses (mileage and per diem or round-trip airfare) for a school site > 50 miles from Albuquerque, New Mexico