



Child Psychology Understand your child



Tough love

Dr Vanessa von Auer of **VA PSYCHOLOGY CENTER** reinforces the importance of and debunks four myths about disciplining toddlers.

The idea of disciplining a child is often misunderstood to be a form of punishment. The fact is, discipline does not equate to punishment. It's actually an act of teaching where you help your child understand what is right and what is wrong by setting and implementing consequences. However, many parents believe that only older children can be disciplined. As a result, they unintentionally allow their toddlers to take over the household. This mentality is often fuelled by certain discipline-related myths. Here are a few of those myths examined:

Myth: No child likes to adhere to rules.

Fact: Research actually indicates that children do want and require rules to adhere to. Without rules, growing up would be utterly confusing and scary. Potentially dangerous mistakes could be made without much chance for rectification. Children should understand that rules are created to help them remain safe, make good decisions and to build strong character – not to restrict the child unnecessarily or to exert undue control over them. Having good rules also helps build trust between a child and parent.

Myth: Young children do not have the language skills and capacity to understand discipline.

Fact: Many parents believe that their two and a half-year-old toddler cannot be disciplined until he or she has acquired fluent language skills. On the contrary, toddlers are actually very smart and acute observers. For example, your child throws a toy and you remove it from his or her possession. The next day, your child throws a toy again and as a consequence for throwing the toy, you take it away again. This way, your child will quickly learn that by throwing the toy, he or she cannot play with this toy any longer. In this instance your consistent actions demonstrate what is acceptable play and what is not.

Myth: Toddlers cannot remember your explanations of what is right and wrong.

Fact: While young children may not retain the content of lengthy reprimands or lectures, they will remember what is important. Think back to that one time you promised your four-year-old that you would take them to Toys 'R' Us but then you forgot. Your child most likely reminded you of this promise until you found the time to make a trip to Toys 'R' Us.

Myth: Setting limits and expectations will only hamper your child's personality development.

Fact: Many parents today believe that setting limits and implementing consequences will upset their children and result in unhappy personalities. Naturally, this is not so, and children whose every wish and whim is given into become entitled individuals, dreadfully unhappy when they realise the real world does not work the same way.



In sum, don't feel bad about disciplining – you are teaching your child how to grow up happy, confident and socially responsible. **F**

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At **VA Psychology Center**, qualified, overseas-trained psychologists use expressive forms of therapy and counselling to help children and their parents manage emotional and behavioural struggles.

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