

Questions & Answers about natural and logical consequences

Natural and logical consequences help children learn responsibility. They also learn how to solve their own problems. With this method, parents can raise children without anger and threats. Children understand what happens when they misbehave and what they should do next time. Mistakes become opportunities for children to learn and grow.

1. What is the difference between natural and logical consequences?

Natural consequences *happen naturally*. When you leave a toy car out in the rain, it rusts. When you don't wash your clothes, they stay dirty. Children learn the natural results of their actions when parents don't rescue or punish them.

Logical consequences are used when natural outcomes are *not safe*. These consequences show children what happens based on their behavior. For everything that children want to do, there are things that they have to do. When children don't do what they should, they lose the chance to do what they want. For in-

stance, children may know to wear helmets while skateboarding. If they forget, parents may take skateboards away for a few days.

Logical consequences only work with follow through. If you tell your 4-year-old son that he will wear his pajamas to daycare if he doesn't get ready, then be prepared to take him in his pajamas (with the cooperation of the daycare and after packing clothes in his bag). If you tell your 8-year-old daughter that she can go skating on Saturday if her room is clean by noon, then you must stick to your word if the cleaning isn't done.

2. How early can parents

begin using natural and logical consequences with children?

You can begin teaching this simple concept to young children. When your toddler finger paints with her pudding instead of eating it, the *logical* consequence is to take the food away and teach her how to "clean up." If she throws her cookie instead of eating it at snack time, she may see the family dog eat it as a *natural* consequence.

3. How do I use natural and logical consequences with preschool children?

Five-year-old Andrew wants to jump in the piles of leaves outside. When his mother asks him to wear his jacket, he tells her that he doesn't need it. Instead of making him wear it, Andrew's mother lets him make the choice. A few minutes later, he's comes back in to get his jacket. Instead of saying, "I told you so," his mother says, "Good idea, Andrew. It's cold outside." If his mother had made him wear the jacket, he would not have learned from the natural consequences of his choice.

Three-year-old twin brothers have a big collection of dinosaurs, but they both want to

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play with the T-Rex at the same time. They begin to fight over who will have it first. Their father simply takes Rex away and keeps him in his closet for a few days. The twins learn that no one wins by fighting over toys, and the outcome is that they both lose out by not sharing.

Four-year-old Mia has a habit of leaving her clay out instead of putting it away when she is finished with it. Her mother does not put it away for her, but says, "If you leave your clay out, it may dry out and you won't be able to play with it anymore." Mia is left to make a choice and deal the outcome.

4. How can I use logical and natural consequences with my school-aged children?

Ten-year-old Marvin always forgets to take his homework to school. Although his mother helps him with it each night, he forgets to put it in his backpack. One morning, Marvin calls his mother at work and asks her to go home, get his book report and bring it to school. His mother shows concern, but does not rescue him. *"It must be tough being the only one in class without their work. I know you worked hard on it. You can take it tomorrow and get a lower grade."*

Each child in the family gets to pick a video to watch on Saturday nights. The children must remember to return their videos when they are due. When nine-year-old Alicia forgets, the \$3 late return fee comes out of

her allowance. Her father shows concern. *"It's tough to spend your allowance on late fees instead of fun things, but you will get another allowance next week."*

It's 7-year-old Sam's turn to set the table this week. As the family sits down for dinner, there are no plates on the table. Sam looks at the family chore chart and says, *"Oops. I forgot to set the table."* He hurries to correct his mistake while the rest of the family waits patiently.

5. When is using natural consequences not a good idea?

Natural consequences will not work when they are not safe for a child. Instead, use logical consequences.

Lisa's 2 ½ year-old daughter, Ashley, undoes her car seat while they are driving. Her mother warned her about safety. The *natural* consequence is that Ashley could be seriously hurt. Instead, Lisa uses a *logical* consequence. She pulls over to the side of the road until Ashley keeps her car seat buckled. The next time they go for a ride in the car, Ashley will know that her mom will pull over if she unbuckles her seat. Ashley keeps her car seat buckled.

Damon enjoys taking his 4-year-old daughter, Jasmine, swimming in the summer. Jasmine does not know how to swim, and she often takes off the life jacket her father makes her wear. Damon is worried about his daughter's safety around water. He tells her that she needs

to keep her life jacket on or they will have to leave the pool. When Jasmine takes off her life jacket, Damon packs up their things and they go home. He tells her that the next time they come to the pool, she will have to decide if she wants to wear her life jacket or leave the pool.

6. What do children learn when parents use logical and natural outcomes?

- I trust you to learn from your mistakes.
- You are valued as an individual.
- You are capable of taking care of yourself.
- I love you for who you are, even if I don't always like your behavior.
- I have faith in you to make good choices.

7. Are there any hints to make natural and logical outcomes work?

Natural and logical consequences work best when:

- Parents don't have to say anything for children to learn natural consequences. There is no need to say, *"I told you your scooter would get stolen if you kept leaving it on the sidewalk."*
- Parents use logical consequences without being angry. *"Tim, you forgot to return the video on your way home from school. You will need to return it today before dark;"* instead of *"Tim, how could you forget again? I reminded you this morning. You'll never rent another video unless you return this right now!"*

- Parents make sure that their children know what their actions will cause. Parents also follow through when they use logical consequences.
- Parents help their children learn for the future instead of relive past mistakes; each mistake (and all children make them) is an opportunity to learn to do better next time.
- Parents focus on solving problems instead of on what problems bring.
- Parents let children help solve problems so that they learn from their mistakes.
- Parents ask children to help decide how to solve problems that might come up. During family meetings, discuss results of actions (bicycles left in the driveway, throwing footballs indoors, forgetting to return library books).
- Parents show concern for their children. Children are more likely to learn from their mistakes when you show concern, *“It’s hard to not be riding bikes with your friends today, but you’ll have a chance again tomorrow.”* Lectures or punishment can make them angry and stop listening.

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