

## Ep 196. How to Discipline Your Kids



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jody Moore**

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## Ep 196. How to Discipline Your Kids

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 196, How to Discipline Your Kids.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

Hey everyone. How you doing today? Thanks for tuning in. I was reading through some of the reviews today because it's been a while since I shared a review here, and almost every single review starts out, "A friend told me to listen to this podcast." "A friend shared this podcast with me."

And I just want you guys to know how much I appreciate it when you share it with your friends. I like to share things that I find to be helpful or uplifting or entertaining or powerful or something along those lines, and so the fact that you're sharing it tells me that you're getting something out of it and it helps me get this work to more people.

So thank you, thank you, thank you so much to all of you who share it. And by the way, I've been on Instagram a lot lately. If you aren't following me there, I've been posting tons of awesome content that you guys are giving me such great feedback on, so you can go find me. It's just Jody Moore Coaching on Instagram and also, if you're on Instagram and you want to give us a shout-out in your Instagram stories or on your feed, make sure you tag me so that I can say hello and thank you.

I do want to share a review today that came from LeftyStick24. The title of this review is let this change your life and it says, "A dear friend of mine introduced me to this podcast." See what I mean? "And the teachings from The Life Coach School. I'll forever be grateful for that friend. The ideas from this podcast, as well as the resources from the Be Bold program have helped me to love motherhood, enjoy my husband and marriage, and love difficult family members and people. It has given me more gratitude for my life and my circumstances. Most importantly, it has helped me to live the gospel of Jesus Christ more fully. I have never known myself better than I do right now. Thanks Jody."

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Thank you LeftyStick24 for that sweet review and I'm so glad to hear about the effect it's having on your life because those are all the things that are my mission and my purpose is to help people achieve exactly those things you just described, so that's awesome.

We're going to talk about disciplining your kids today because this is something that I coach on quite a bit. It's something that I've talked about on the podcast in various forms before, but it's a subject that I think in my mind, I have so simplified for myself in terms of the way I do this and this is by no means to say that I'm an expert at disciplining my children.

I'm working on it as well. But I never think about it as being a complicated thing to do or to understand, and I thought let's talk about it a little bit on the podcast because I sense that to a lot of people, it is actually really complicated and there's a lot of emotion behind it. There's a lot of even negativity behind it.

So that's what I want to dive into a little bit today. So I want to begin with that word discipline. I really debated whether or not to call this episode disciplining kids or holding kids accountable or what to call it, but I decided that I think what a lot of people think they need is help disciplining their kid or to know how to discipline their children.

And so I purposely put that word in here. I want you to ask yourself when you hear the word discipline, what do you think of and what emotions do you feel. Do you associate that with something negative? Do you associate disciplining children with you being angry? Is it all about punishment?

Do you tend to have all or nothing thinking when you think about disciplining your kids because you've heard people say over and over again that the most important thing is that you be consistent and that you and your spouse are on the same page? Two very challenging things to do, by the way.

So I'm not telling you any of those things are right or wrong but I just want you to notice when you hear the word discipline, if some of those things

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come up or anything else that comes up for you, and I want us to just play with discipline a little bit and see what makes the most sense.

Now, like I said, I debated or not whether to approach this from the aspect of holding kids accountable. Is that the same thing as discipline? Well, if you get really technical and you get on to dictionary.com and things, they're defined a little bit differently, but in my mind, when I think about disciplining my children, I do think of it as me doing my job as a parent to hold my kids accountable to my expectations.

And I'll just say that I am actually a big fan of disciplining my children in this way or of holding them accountable. I think that it is me being a good mother when I do this. Now, like I said, it doesn't mean I'm always good at it, but to me, it's an important part of being a good parent.

So let's just take a step back for a moment and talk about what makes a good parent. Now, I talked about this at length in episode 167, Successful Parenting, so if you want to go listen to that one after this, I'm not going to spend a long time on it but I know not all of you have listened to that episode and it's really important that we have a foundation that really makes it clear that being a good parent has to be defined correctly.

So the way I taught this recently, I was asked in my stake to teach at a stake parenting fireside and I started by asking everyone what makes a good parent? How do we know if we're being successful as parents? And we made a whole list on the chalkboard because they don't like to keep whiteboards in cultural halls because where there are whiteboards, there are markers.

And where there are churches, there are children, and where there are children and markers, there's trouble. Anyway, that's at least true in our church building. A little something I learned. So on the chalkboard we made a list of all the things people raised their hands and told me they thought would mean that they were doing a good job as a parent.

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And the list sounded like this, "Well, if my kids turn out to be responsible citizens, if my kids love the Lord and they're keeping the commandments, if my kids feel loved and they understand that I love them and they understand that their heavenly father loves them, if my kids are confident."

So notice, every one of these statements starts with the kids and how the kids are or how they're feeling or who they're being or how they turn out. And so we made a whole list like that and there was only one gentleman in that audience, one older gentleman who said, "I just don't want to get angry and yell at them."

Everybody else talked about the kids. So of course, then I said to them, this is an interesting list because what this is saying is that in order for us to be successful, we have to try to control and manipulate our children. We have to basically take away their agency and get them to live the way we want them to live and feel the way we want them to feel and turn out the way we want them to turn out.

And if I knew how to tell you to get your kids to turn out any certain way, I would tell you that, but I don't know how to do that and I actually don't think that we're supposed to do that either. Because let's go for this episode to the proclamation.

So for those of you who may not be members of the church, I'm going to refer to a document called The Family, a proclamation to the world, and we will link up to it in the show notes if you'd like to read it. It's basically a document that our church authorities published back in 1995 that just talks about the importance of families and the roles of fathers and mothers and families in heavenly father's plan for all of us.

And there is one paragraph in there, it's actually mainly one sentence that talks about what we should do as parents. So I think it's a good place to look to determine what makes a successful parent. So I'm just going to read that and then we're going to break down that paragraph.

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It starts out by saying, "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and their children." Pretty basic, right? Then it quotes Psalm 127:3 and says, "Children are in heritage as the Lord." Then it goes on to say, "Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of god, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."

So that one kind of long sentence is basically what it tells us to do as parents. I'm going to break that down in just a minute, but then I'll just sum up that paragraph. It says, "Husbands and wives, mothers and fathers will be held accountable before god for the discharge of these obligations."

So let's break down that sentence. It says first of all that we're supposed to rear them in love and righteousness. In other words, do your job as a parent in love and righteousness as much of the time as possible. It doesn't say that we should do it in anger and frustration and fear and worry and overwhelm.

Now again, I don't think that it's useful to feel bad if you get angry and frustrated and worried. I just want you to see here in the family proclamation that the goal is to stay in love and righteousness as much as possible.

The second thing it says is that we are to provide for their physical and spiritual needs. That one to me is fairly self-explanatory. I'm not going to spend a long time on it today. I want to spend more time on number one, rearing in love and righteousness, and the last thing it says, which is that our job is to teach them.

And then it goes on to give us some suggestions about what things to teach them in. Teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments, and to be law-abiding citizens. That's it. That's what the proclamation of the family says about parenting. Notice, it doesn't say anything about how the kids turn out at all. It's about who we are being, which is really the only thing we need to focus on.

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I think that many of us have this idea that there's this cause and effect that's going to happen as we raise our children and we think there should be this cause and effect. If I teach my child to keep the commandments, then they will grow up to keep the commandments and love the Lord. Cause and effect.

When the true cause and effect is just if I teach my child to keep the commandments, then the effect is that I'm being the kind of parent I want to be. That's it. That's really the only effect that we know of. We don't know how our children will respond. So when we talk about teaching them, we teach them but that doesn't mean we can count on them learning it or them accepting it or them following it.

So of course, we want to work on making our teaching as effective as possible, we want to be prayerful and thoughtful about how to be most effective with this child, but the outcome is not up to us. It's up to them. And it doesn't mean that it's not worth your best effort and time.

This is a classic situation of when you want to have your goal be about the behaviors of reaching the goal and yes, we want to choose behaviors that we think will create the end result we want, but the main focus needs to be on the behaviors of the goal, rather than the end result of the goal.

So by way of example, let's imagine that you trained to run a marathon. Did I ever tell you that I've run a couple of marathons? I have. This was like, in a whole 'nother life before I had children when I could run 26.2 miles. It's a crazy amount of running.

Anyway, let's imagine that you trained for a marathon. You did all the things necessary like following a running schedule, you ate the kind of foods that your body needed to be able to train and run that marathon. Maybe you did some strength training at some point to build up your muscles, as I had to do. I found that my endurance in terms of my lung capacity got a little bit ahead of my muscle capacity in my legs, so I had to start doing strength training.



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Anyway, let's imagine you do all that. And now it's the day of the marathon and the marathon that you're registered to run is cancelled due to rain. Then would we say that you were successful at training for a marathon or at running a marathon even? Because now you're stronger, you're healthier, you're capable of running a marathon, and I will say running for that long was mentally more challenging for me than physical after a while.

So at any rate, you've achieved all of those things. Now, would you be disappointed that the race was cancelled? Yes, of course. But would you look back and regret that you had done all of that? I highly doubt it. Because you've gained all of the benefits of training to run a marathon, even though on that particular day with that particular race it's not going to happen.

So this is how I like to think about raising my kids is I'm doing everything I can within my control to prepare for that marathon of having my child turn out to be a happy, well-rounded adult. But that may or may not happen, it's certainly not in my control.

So that's my little speech about that. Now, let's talk about discipline in a little bit more detail. So I'm going to teach you what I've learned based on my study of human behavior and also, I'm going to tie in a little bit what I did as a leadership coach because the parallels between raising children and managing people are really easy to see and really fascinating.

As parents, we are managers of those children. So one of the things that we know based on studies of human behavior is that human beings respond to rewards and consequences. We don't tend to change behaviors just based on a guilt trip, for example. There have to be rewards and or consequences typically to get human beings to be motivated enough to change behaviors.

Now, I know right now there's a big push for positive parenting, and I want you to choose what's best for you and your family, and I'm not an expert on positive parenting. But my understanding is it's a lot of rewards and not many or if any consequences. I want you to know that again, studies in



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human nature show that human beings tend to respond best to some of both.

There was study that I learned about in college in one of my political science courses that explained that the reason we create laws the way we do is because the best way to motivate people to behave a certain way is to have rewards and consequences. So for example, certain states tried launching campaigns to minimize littering, and maybe you saw some of these ads.

All kinds of ads about how good citizens don't litter and good people in general don't litter. They throw their trash in the trashcan. And that wasn't anywhere near as effective as when they decided to just put a very high-priced ticket on littering.

So that is just how we operate as human beings. It's costs and benefits. We are rational people who weigh in our mind costs and benefits. Sometimes subconsciously even. And I even think it's fascinating to notice that the Lord works this way with us.

We have blessings available to us for keeping commandments, and we have consequences for not keeping commandments. So for example, we're asked to pay tithing. You pay 10% of our income or increase annually in tithes. And when we pay tithing, there are endless blessings available to us in this life and in the next.

And if we don't pay tithing, then there are consequences for us in this life, for example, not able to get a temple recommend, and then there are consequences in the next life as well. So the Lord works with us in this same way and I think that's a good model for parenting.

So here's a really simple basic strategy that I find works well for myself and my clients and like I said, it's the same thing that I taught when I was a leadership coach helping managers and directors lead teams. Three simple steps. First step, you need to have clear expectations and communicate them regularly.

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Now, this sounds really simple and basic but it's actually not that easy to figure out. I am constantly asking myself what do I expect of my children? And it changes as they grow up and as they change and as our family dynamic and our needs change. So what do I expect of my children?

Don't assume, by the way, that your children know even if you are really clear on it. Even if you've told them multiple times, you have to keep communicating it over and over and over again what your expectations are. The more clear and specific you can be, the better.

If you want to and if it's appropriate based on the ages of your kids, you can create a little bit more unity by including your kids on why you have the expectations you have first of all. You may even include them on helping to define what the expectations are. It can definitely be a family discussion.

Again, depending on your children and their ages and things. But ideally, you want to have a clear understanding of here's what we do in our home, here's what we don't do or say, and sometimes you're going to figure that out as you go along and as your children are behaving in ways that you realize are not in alignment with what you expect. Then you're going to sit down and have a discussion about oh, let me be clear, this is okay in our home and this is not okay in our home.

I also want to make sure that you are choosing these expectations, you and your husband and your family or whoever else, that you're choosing them for yourselves. Don't just take what you think everybody else thinks you should be doing or what your parents did. Some of that might be useful but some of that may not. You get to choose for yourself what you expect.

That's step number one. Step number two is to outline what will be the rewards and or consequences for following or not following the expectations. It's actually very simple. Here's what happens if you do it, and or here's what happens if you don't do it. So we have certain expectations in our home that I just expect and they don't get a reward for doing it. It's just an expected part of being in our family.

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There are other things that maybe I want to reward, especially if it's a brand-new expectation and we're trying to all get in the habit of it. There are definitely consequences for not following some of our basic expectations. Like if you use certain language or speak to one another in a certain way, there's a consequence for that.

Now, I am a big fan of the Love and Logic parenting series. You can check out any of the Love and Logic books if you want to learn more about their approach. But one of the things I've learned from Love and Logic is that life provides consequences pretty naturally a lot of the time for our kids. If we allow them to experience those consequences and we don't swoop in and rescue them from them, then it actually saves you having to do the job and allows the child to learn through natural consequences.

So if my child insists on not wearing a coat, then maybe I want to let them be cold that day rather than bring a coat in my bag, knowing that later they're going to be cold. There's all kinds of natural consequences, and some of them are much more serious. I realize that. I realize this is easier said than done, but so many times as parents we swoop in and rescue them from those consequences, which causes them to miss out on the opportunity to learn how to manage their behaviors based on rational thinking.

So outlining consequences and rewards. This can be fun, you guys. Like I said, sit down with your family and figure it out together when appropriate. Keep it simple. The more simple it is, the more success you're going to have implementing it going forward. I also recommend that if possible, you make it easy for the child to self-assess and that you give the child some, what we call, freedom within a framework.

So example, instead of me saying hey, I need you to do this chore every day after school, I may say this chore needs to get done every day and it needs to be done by five o'clock every day but you choose when you're going to do it. So again, this is all age dependent and child dependent, but when necessary, you want to make them feel a part of the process and we

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want to respect them as we outline expectations, consequences, and rewards.

Alright, the third and final step then is to enforce those consequences or rewards. Now, I know that sounds really obvious, but let's just talk for a moment about why we don't always do that. These are some of the things I coach on really regularly. It's usually the first few people are like yeah, yeah, I know, I need to explain a little more clearly, I probably need to revisit that expectation, yes, I need to outline the consequences or maybe they tell me that they have.

But then it almost always comes down to, well, I'm not enforcing them if I have them. I'm not doing that consistently. So here are some of the reasons I hear. First of all, I'll hear, "Well no, I have been. I've been punishing my child and it's not working." And I always say, what does that mean, it's not working? Because if we think that enforcing consequences is something we do in order to change their behavior, then we've forgotten what I taught you in the very beginning, which is your child has agency and your job is to be a good parent. But that may or may not change their behavior.

So, don't enforce consequences thinking that your child's behavior is going to change. It may not. Just do it because that's the kind of parent you want to be and that's who the Lord has asked you to be and that's what feels like you doing your job, not like "Well, it's not working, so I quit doing it."

Another reason is that we've made it too complicated, and so it's very overwhelming. Another reason we don't do it consistently is that we're not willing to do hard things. This is something that I'm trying to really observe in my own life because a lot of things in my life have been easy for me. There are certain things, I should say, there are plenty of things that are not easy for me. But a lot of the things that I choose to spend my time doing have come pretty easily and so I tend to want everything to be easy.

And this is human nature, of course, right? Once it gets too hard, we're like, "It's just too hard." So, you have to be willing to question, like what if I were

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willing to do more hard things? What if I was okay with it being hard? What if I don't need it to be easy in order for me to do it? Like, when my brain says it's just too hard, lately I reply to my brain with, well so what? So what that it's hard?

Somebody posted on Instagram in reply to one of my quotes recently, this quote that I thought was so brilliant. She said that someone told her, "If you do hard things, your life will be easy. If you do easy things, your life will be hard." Isn't that so true?

So this is one of those hard things that, if I'm willing to show up like the kind of parent I want to be, then it may make my life easier. I'll at least get to know that I'm doing my best. I'm doing a good job, right?

Now, the last reason I see really commonly that people aren't enforcing consequences is that they think they have to get mad to do it, and they're tired of being mad and frustrated and angry and overwhelmed. And so I want to offer to you that you do not have to be mad do discipline your child. Did you know this? You really don't.

You don't have to be upset. You don't have to be yelling. You don't have to be frustrated and angry. And, in fact, what we read earlier is that we're to rear our children in love and righteousness. And you can be calm and loving and kind and compassionate and still discipline your child. Did you know this?

It looks like this, "Oh my gosh, I love you so much. Now I'm going to have to do my job as your mom and enforce this consequence. Such a bummer. I wish I didn't have to do that. But I love you too much no to be a good mom to you."

It looks like, "Hey, let's go to your room until you can calm down," as a child is screaming and having a fit. It looks like, "I'm so bummed that you're not going to be able to go do that fun thing now because you chose to do that instead. Such a bummer."

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So, sometimes kids will do things that you weren't expecting, that you hadn't sat down and had a conversation about. I get that. It comes up in the moment. And you're going to need to make decisions about holding them accountable when they suddenly do something very unexpected or very inappropriate. And I want to just kind of offer to you that, at that moment, you're going to want to freak out a little bit.

And you can, or you can just skip the freak out part and you can go right to the part where you start thinking logically about how to be the parent now. You start thinking about, okay, well, is there some problem-solving that needs to happen now? Do I want to hold them accountable in some way? Is there some natural consequence that's going to happen that I should just allow to unfold to a certain extent? Do I need to set some boundaries with this child?

So, I love the idea of just asking myself, if I'm rearing them in love and righteousness, what does love do in this situation? And love doesn't just turn and walk away and ignore it. Love holds kids accountable and love steps up and does our job.

We are entrusted with these kids, but it doesn't mean that they're not supposed to have agency. It just means that we get to be in love and righteousness if we want to.

I want to wrap up by emphasizing what President Eyring said just this past general conference in his talk, if you listened to his talk. This was at the very end of his talk, and he basically was quoting another general authority. He didn't say who it was. He just said that a general authority in the past had counseled him when he was worried about his family.

He said he was worried about his family not being together in the next life due to some choices that some family members were making. And this general authority said to him, "You are worrying about the wrong problem. You just live worthy of the celestial kingdom and the family arrangements will be more wonderful than anything you can imagine."

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And I loved that quote. I was like, “What did he just say? Rewind that. I’ve got to hear that again. It’s so good.” We just focus on being who we want to be, and I don’t know how it all works in the next life, but I know it will.

Alright, you guys, thanks so much for joining me today. I will see you next week for another episode. Take care, bye-bye.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to [jodymoore.com/askjody](http://jodymoore.com/askjody) and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.