

# INSIGHTS

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## Let the consequences do the teaching

Behavioural consequences are a parent's best friends. When consistently applied consequences will improve kids' behaviour and increase personal responsibility.



Too often parents will overtalk or repeat themselves to get cooperation from their kids. Too much talk and most modern kids tune out.

Alternatively, parents who protect their kids from the consequences of poor or selfish behaviour aren't doing them any favours as they are robbing them of terrific learning opportunities.

I love the notion of behavioural consequences as they teach kids to take responsibility for their lives and to make smarter choices.

Parents can use two types of consequences – logical and natural consequences

A logical consequence is used more frequently in family situations. They require adult intervention and are used when their behaviour disturbs other people. A child who makes a noise in the family room is asked to leave; children who refuse to clean their toys lose them for a period of time; and teenagers who come home late from a party lose the right to go out next time.

### The 3 R's of consequences

Consequences often involve the withdrawal of a privilege or a right. For example, a teenager who spends more time than agreed on Facebook, may lose access to technology for a day or two.

Restitution, or making up to someone for unfair treatment or for loss of a possession is another form of consequence. A child who willfully breaks his sister's toy may make full or part payment for a replacement. In both these examples the consequences are **related** to children's misdemeanours, and are **reasonable** and **respectful** of their dignity.

A natural consequence involves NO adult interference. For instance, a child who leaves an excursion note at home will miss the excursion; a child who spends all his pocket money on the first day will have nothing for the weekend and a child who oversleeps and misses the bus walks to school. In these examples, children learn from the direct consequences of their own decisions and thus they are not protected from negative outcomes from their parents.

### "It's your fault, mum!"

Some kids are experts at manipulating their parents to rescue them from experiencing the consequences of their poor choice. They'll blame their parents for not getting them out of bed on time, or for not reminding them about their responsibilities. It's best to stand back and let the consequences work their magic! Note you shouldn't use natural consequences when safety is an issue. Act decisively to ensure your child is safe.

Here are four simple tips to help make sure your consequences are effective:

#### Tip 1: Set consequences like a neutral cop.

Issue a consequence using sarcasm or anger and your kids will be angry at you. Issue it like a neutral cop free from emotion or without being heavy-handed and your kids are more likely to be mad at themselves.

#### Tip 2: When possible, negotiate consequences prior to engaging in new activities.

If your young person is going out for the first time with friends at night, talk about their behaviour and home time. Also discuss the likely consequences if kids don't stick to the agreement. As a rule, kids are more likely to abide by consequences when they've had a say in deciding them.

#### Tip 3: Avoid life sentences.

Ban a child from going out for a few days rather than leaving the duration open-ended. Set a time-frame for the consequences and remember the second of the 3R's – **reasonable** – means that parents shouldn't go overboard with consequences.

#### Tip 4: Don't acquiesce to terrorism...or guilt.

If your child issues a threat saying something like, "There's no way you can make me come home at six o'clock," don't rise to the bait. Deflect it by saying, "We'll talk about this tomorrow." Don't give into the threats of running away or non-cooperation. "I hope you don't run away. It's great having you at home. I want what is best for you." Avoid stating what you would love to say, which maybe something like, "Yeah, try running away. You wouldn't last inside two days before you are back here begging for a good feed and comfortable bed!!"

Bite your tongue instead, and let the consequences do the teaching!

For more practical ideas to help you raise happy confident kids subscribe to Happy Kids, Michael's free email newsletter at [Parentingideas.com.au](http://Parentingideas.com.au). You'll get a free Chores & Responsibilities Guide when you do.

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