5. Natural and Logical Consequences

At a Glance...
One of life’s most important lessons is that actions have consequences. Parents can use natural and logical consequences to guide their children, but planning ahead is required to be effective.

Time Required
30 to 45 minutes, depending on number of participants

Core Concept
Parents will plan and implement appropriate consequences to children’s misbehavior.

Objective
Participants will develop logical consequences to use with children for different types of misbehavior.

Materials
- Chalk board or flip chart with a list of child behaviors
- Markers or chalk
- Paper
- Pens and/or pencils
- Question box
- “Natural Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-a)
- “Natural Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-b key)
- “Logical Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-c)
- “Logical Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-d key)
- “Match the Action With the Consequence” (handout D-5-e)
Icebreaker

Match the Action With the Consequence:
Use handout D-5-e, *Match the Action With the Consequence*. Cut apart the statements. Give each participant one statement, either an action or a consequence. It will be the task of class participants to find the person who has the card that matches theirs. As class members look for their match, they are likely to get some strange or humorous combinations before they find the correct match.

Facilitator Script

Today, we are going to talk about one way to help discipline or guide children. This method is called natural or logical consequences. Remember that the purpose of discipline is to teach or instruct the child self-control and appropriate behavior.

Let’s define natural consequences. (Write the definition on the board or flip chart.) *Natural consequences are the automatic results of actions.* Parents can just allow them to happen. Most of the consequences of the actions we used in the opening activity were natural consequences of the actions listed.

Let’s look at some actions our children might do and try to come up with the natural consequences that might happen as a result.

Give out “Natural Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-a.) Ask participants to work in pairs (or all together, if there are only two or three participants) to decide what natural consequences might follow those behaviors. Point out that the first item on the list has the potential consequences listed as an example. Go over the chart and have each pair or the group to share what they thought might happen as a result of the children’s behaviors. (Refer to item D-5-b key for possible answers, if the group has trouble coming up with natural consequences. If there is only one participant, allow him or her to work on the list alone.)

Natural consequences are not always the best way to guide children. There are times when natural consequences are a good way for children to learn, but there are times when they are not appropriate.
Natural consequences should not be used if any of the following is true:

a. When the consequence is dangerous (e.g., the child may fall from the roof if he or she climbs on the house or the child may be run over when playing in the street.)

b. If the consequence is delayed for a long time (e.g., the bicycle rusts from being left out, or the child fails school for not completing his or her work.)

c. If the consequence causes problems for others (e.g., the parent backing over the bicycle damages the car, or the child misses the bus causing the parent to have to take the child to school or risk getting in trouble with the law for keeping the child at home that day.)

When natural consequences are not appropriate, another option is to use logical consequences. Let’s define logical consequences. (Write the definition on the board or flip chart.) Logical consequences are planned in advance by the parent (often with the input from the child) and are carried out if the child misbehaves. The consequences are logical because they make sense according to the behavior. (For example, parents may have a rule that the children pick up all toys and put them in the toy box when they finish playing with them. A logical consequence for failure to pick up the toys is that the parent will put all the toys found on the floor in a box and put them away for one week.)

Logical consequences take more time and thought than do natural consequences, because you need to plan them in advance for them to be most effective.

Here are some guidelines for developing logical consequences:

a. They should make sense based on the misbehavior;

b. They should not be too strong or too weak;

c. They should be enforceable;

d. They should be agreed to in advance by both parent and child, when appropriate, and;

e. They should be used consistently.
Let’s see if we can come up with some logical consequences for actions of children.

Give out “Logical Consequences Chart” (handout D-5-c.) Have participants work in pairs or all together as a group if the class is small. Ask them to list logical consequences that could follow the children’s behavior. Remind them that these consequences should make sense based on the misbehavior, should not be too strong or too weak, should be enforceable, should be agreed to in advance by both parent and child, and should be used consistently. You may want to list these guidelines on the board or flip chart. Have them share their responses with each other. (You may refer to item D-4-d key for possible responses.)

It is almost impossible to come up with logical consequences for every misbehavior. However, you can make some general rules that will fit many situations. These rules can be set in advance and should be agreed to by parents and children. Some examples include:

a. If you break it, fix it or pay for it.

b. If you don’t use something in the right manner, you don’t get to use it for a set period of time.

c. School work must be done before watching television.

d. Curfew is at 10p.m. If you don’t make it, you don’t get to go out next weekend.

Allow participants to share other general rules that could be applied to lots of situations.

What are the advantages to natural and logical consequences? (Allow participants to respond before sharing the items below.)

a. By setting rules in advance and the consequence for violating them, the child knows what you expect and what will happen if the rules are broken.

b. Consequences help teach children how things work in the real world. If you talk back to your boss, you don’t get spanked—you may lose your job. If you don’t do your school work, you fail the class. If you speed, you may get a ticket or have a wreck.
Final Thoughts

If participants are willing, have them name some problem behaviors that they have seen in their own children. Allow class members to brainstorm some natural or logical consequences that could be used in those situations.

Assign homework. Ask participants whose children are of elementary school age or older to talk this over with their children when they get home and come up with a list of some logical consequences for misbehavior. Ask them to share their list with the class at the next meeting if they are willing.