"CHERISHED MOMENTS" COLUMN
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The “Cherished Moments” column is written by Cathy L. Graham, County Extension Director with the Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The following column will provide information to improve relationships between adults and children. “Cherished Moments” is dedicated to the many adults (parents, teachers, caregivers, volunteers, educators) who strive to grow and to the children who will surely benefit.

“Children need limits with independence, roots, and wings”
-- Thomas Lickona

Four Words for Discipline

Dozen of books have been written on the subject of discipline, but perhaps the best guidance comes from four words from Dr. Grace Mitchell, author of “A Very Practical Guide to Discipline for Young Children” (Telshare, 1998). The words rhyme for easy recall: anticipate, hesitate, investigate and communicate.

**Anticipate.** After all, we are bigger and smarter than children are. Anticipate reminds us to look ahead, to prevent problems from happening. Parents anticipate when they baby-proof the house to avoid collisions of will. They anticipate when they realize that waiting at the restaurant will be hard for the two-year-old, and bring some paper and crayons to occupy the time. They anticipate when they provide extra rest and comforting quiet time for the child under stress who is beginning a new school experience.

Anticipating also means recognizing how individual children might react in particular situations. Parents know that one child will need more time to adjust to transitions than another.

They anticipate when they realize that a visit to the dentist’s office will be frightening for the preschooler, and they explain the visit carefully beforehand.

They realize that adjusting to a new sibling may mean that an older child will need special attention from a parent. They help children remember ground rules for behavior before visitors arrive.

Anticipation allows parents too hold off many difficulties, rather than simply standing by to fix things after disaster occurs.
**Hesitate.** Parents are most effective in guidance when they spend time calming themselves emotionally and thinking about how best to teach lessons. Discipline is not just about showing children how upset we are by their mistakes, but rather about considering what each situation allows us to teach.

Rather than reacting swiftly and later regretting hasty actions, parents who hesitate give themselves permission think first.

“I’m pretty upset right now that the dog got hurt,” says Mom to the toddler who pulled the dog’s tail. “We need to sit down over here while we think about how to help the dog feel better.”

A calmer head will find better teaching methods to help the toddler learn gentle actions than an impulsive smack on the hand.

**Investigate.** There are always reasons for children’s behavior, whether or not we are wise enough to discern them. Children may behave in undesirable ways because of developmental limitations. For example, toddler temper tantrums are unattractive but effective ways of expressing emotion when one has limited vocabulary or self control.

Children make mistakes because they have not been taught better behaviors. They may be out of bounds when stress builds up in their lives, or needs for attention and security are not met.

When parents figure out reasons for behavior, they can find appropriate responses. One-size-fits-all discipline methods, such as time out for every offense, fail to respond to particular needs or situations. The behavior of a 3-year-old who is testing the limits after all the attention has been given to the new baby might benefit far more from some one-on-one with Mom than being sent again to his room.

**Communicate.** Good discipline is about helping children see the sense in acting a particular way. Clear, specific communication geared to a young child’s level of understanding is needed for children to learn why some behaviors are better than others. “Ouch, that hurts Dewey, the dog” says Mom to the toddler. “Pat the dog instead “, as she demonstrates gentleness.

Anticipate, hesitate, investigate, communicate - four words to consider for effective discipline for young children.

*Source: Growing Together Newsletter*

**Fun Things to Do with Your Child**

- Go to the library and check out new CDs.
- Go for a family walk after dark. Take a flashlight.
- Plan an afternoon to go for a root beer float or ice cream sundae.
Fly a kite.

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