

# The Smiley😊System

## Compliance & Responsibility Training

*A Handbook for Parents and Caregivers*

Based on RESPECT™  
😊EFFECT concepts!



**By Norma Y. Leben**

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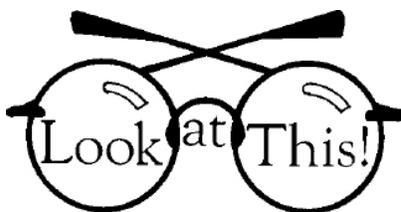
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## **Disclaimer**

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This system will not work for parents or adults who...

- Are physically afraid of their children.
- Will not discipline because they fear losing a child's love.
- Are selfish, love only themselves, and think that children are nuisances and only a retirement plan.
- Do not model desirable behaviors.
- Believe that love alone will change the child.
- Do not have time or energy for their children.
- Want to leave disciplining children to other authority figures like school teachers and probation officers.
- Think that disrespect and a bad attitude is a phase that will pass as the child gets older.
- Think that children should innately know how to behave and to spend time training them is ridiculous.
- Feel that they can do "just as my parents and I'll do okay."
- Think that, "chores are something my children should do anyway, so why should I reward them?"
- Are inconsistent, try once, and give up after a few days or weeks. (It takes 21 days to shape a new behavior!)
- Find excuses such as, "it's too much work," "this won't work, why try," or "my child is hopeless."
- Do not support their spouse in consistently using the Smiley☺ system.
- Use teasing, ridiculing, or withholding fairly earned rewards to exercise their parental power.
- Forget the weekly payday ritual to redeem Smileys☺.
- Will not take away Smileys☺ when children misbehave because they want to be "a good guy" and always liked.

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## Introduction

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I have been a psychotherapist for over 25 years. For 10 years, I was a Foster Mom to 40 really "tough" boys and girls from 5 to 17-years-old in age. They had few independent living skills and were mostly below average in school grades. They disobeyed, used bad language, showed disrespectful attitudes, refused to complete homework and chores, talked back, picked fights, sulked, whined, complained, lied, threw temper tantrums, and destroyed property.

Does this sound familiar? With eight such children, as a foster parent my life was totally chaotic until I created the **Smiley☺Board**. It provided both an incentive system for encouraging children to be compliant and responsible for their actions and a way to record changes in misbehaviors that both the child and I could discuss. It made my life so much easier. Now I could finally see progress as behaviors improved and misbehaviors faded away.

### *My Personal Philosophy*



I have worked with children and teens in youth centers, on street corners, in group homes, with foster families, and in my private practice. I seldom believed any of them were truly pathological. Most were just troubled kids who had a long list of learned misbehaviors. In my heart I believe that "there are no bad children, only misbehaving children." If you study a

child, you can find their strengths and help them overcome their shortcomings. I encourage parents to "be optimistic" and look beyond a child's misbehaviors to discover their positive intentions. I stress that parents must agree upon a set of disciplinary guidelines for responding to misbehaviors. In the next section, I will describe the discipline principles I've conceptualized and used for many years to successfully work with children.

## My Principles for Child Discipline and Giving Logical Consequences

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1. *Children need love and attention, to feel that they belong, and to be fairly treated.* This is my most fundamental principle. Children also need to believe that their opinion is valued and that they are respected enough to make their own choices. Wise parents will offer opportunities so that these needs are met thereby preventing misbehaviors. If a child's needs are not met, misbehaviors will soon surface.

Four common reasons that children misbehave are:

- **To get attention.** If children find that misbehavior works better than “being good,” they will act out to get your attention. *Solution:* Provide positive attention verbally and non-verbally, through talking, touching, playing, and doing things together. Set aside one-to-one quality time, even for a few minutes with your children.
  - **To seek revenge.** Children will seek revenge not only against siblings and peers, but also against parents if they feel unfairly or inconsistently treated. *Solution:* Be fair. Follow rules previously agreed upon with your children.
  - **To show their inadequacies.** Children will behave as if they were a younger age or claim to have forgotten a skill so as to avoid responsibility for a chore, for example, homework or cleaning their room. *Solution:* Ask the child three questions about their recent successes. Give them assistance and encouragement, but don't do the chore completely for them. See my suggestions in the *Frequently Asked Questions* section.
  - **To show that they have power.** Children will act opposite to your requests. *Solution:* Empower the child by allowing your child to voice their opinions for your consideration. Offer several acceptable or practical choices from your point of view as parent for the child to consider rather than dictating a single choice. Insist only on health, safety, and education as non-negotiable principles. For example, you could say, “You may play outside if you put on a jacket or a sweater.” Or, “You can eat one or two spoonfuls of vegetables before having dessert.”
2. *Catch the child doing good things.* Tell them that they are doing GREAT at least once a day. Be specific, for example, “I love the way you hold your fork showing better control than yesterday.” Train yourself to be more observant and describe the details of their improvements.

3. *Establish rules that must be followed for the good of all concerned.* **Health, Safety, and Education** are my three non-negotiable issues because the ultimate job of parent or caregiver is: To Provide, To Protect, and To Prepare the child for the future. I call these the three P's.
4. *Practice being fair and consistent.* Assure children of their safety even when you are mad. The parent can do this by telling the child, "I'm very mad at you right now. It's better for us to take a five-minute break and then return to this issue."
5. *Practice assertiveness by stating what is acceptable and unacceptable to you.* Be firm about your own rights which models self-respect. Children learn more by watching how you do things rather than hearing you say how to do something. Say things specifically to a child, for example, "I can see that you used my tools and left them all over the garage. Come pick them up now and return them to the proper place so that I can find them when I need them."
6. *Discipline children in a kind and firm manner.* Use kindness in understanding and patience in gathering the facts around an incident. Offer choices when giving consequences. Firmness is required in following through with the consequences. To put it differently, be "hard on the issue, soft on the child." This approach helps children to be responsible for their own behavior, thus developing self-discipline to control their own actions.
7. *Listen more and talk less.* Use my "Six-Second Rule" during discipline. Simply put, communicate your discipline message within six seconds that is the typical attention span of an ADHD child. To do this, you need to develop clear one-liners. Examples include:

"You're rolling your eyes around when I'm talking. That's disrespectful."

"Now you're looking at me straight. I like that."

"I heard a foul word being used. Please use clean language or be prepared for the logical consequences of losing a Smiley☺ for each swear word."

"Fifteen minutes to bedtime. Start putting away your games."

"Ten minutes to bedtime. It's time to put away your games and put on your pajamas."

"Five minutes to bedtime. Let's go brush our teeth and select a good book to read in bed."

When giving directions, short statements are a better way to capture a child's attention as well as making sure that this process won't drag on for a long time, which can discourage both parties. The Six-Second Rule prevents adults from nagging which is one of my biggest No-No.

8. *Acknowledge the child's feelings.* Use "feeling words" when talking to a child to insure that the learning process touches their heart. Teaching empathy for another's feelings nurtures development of a conscience and motivates a child's moral development. For Morning Glory Treatment Center for Children, I also created *The Feelings Wheel Game* to teach children 64 feelings. If you are interested in this tool, there is an order form in the *Attachments*.
9. *There are two kinds of consequences—natural and logical.* Both kinds help children learn from their mistakes. An example of natural consequences is a child forgetting to bring an umbrella on a rainy day, so she gets wet walking home. Another example is if a child licks his ice cream cone too hard and it falls on the ground. If the child gets no more ice cream and cries, this is a lesson learned. In summary, I define a natural consequence as a *common sense* result.
10. *Parents can create logical consequence to teach a lesson about the real world.* I believe this motivates children to make responsible decisions about their future behavior. I use the four "R" principles, which are:

*Relate* the consequence to the misbehavior/incident.

*Reasonable* consequences should fit the child's developmental age and their mental and physical ability.

*Reliably* enforced consequences. Choose a consequence that considers timing, the duration, and your ability to supervise it.

*Respect.* Deliver the consequence with respect. Watch your own attitude, posture, and tone of voice so that you communicate good will and not anger or personal vindictiveness.

I recommend three logical consequences for all misbehaviors. I do this so that a good value will sink in. Include the child in discussing the consequences. Offer the child choices and accept the child's decision. This models your respect for the child and others. Be patient and prepared to teach and practice each value like "tell the truth" 21 times with the child.

11. *Let the child experience the consequences of their choices.* These consequences may not be the wisest, but they teach the child to be accountable for the commitments. This process teaches self-respect and responsibility.
12. *Model keeping your promises by following through with your commitment* Do not ask the child to do what you cannot or are unwilling to do yourself!
13. *Always end a disciplinary session with a lessons learned summary.* Ask the child, "What have you learned from this incident?" Listen carefully without further comment.



Give a smile or a light touch to signify the end of the conversation then walk away to let the child regain their composure, self-esteem, and save face. This closing routine signals to the child that their summary of what has been learned will end the discipline session swiftly and constructively. Remember, once its over, its over!