

Ep #83 How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 1

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In this podcast, we will discuss Effective Negative Consequences and how they work.

This is episode 83. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your parenting coach, Siope Kinikini.

Hello everyone. How is everyone doing? I hope everybody's doing great. Today we will be talking about consequences. And I know this is a topic a lot of parents have been asking me about during the last couple of weeks. In fact, the majority of the calls I have received over the last couple of weeks have been parents requesting help with applying consequences for misbehavior of their children. So, I think it's really appropriate and actually timely for me to address this, so I can share this information with you, and you can start to implement it and use it.

There are three different things that we will cover during this podcast, and I want to outline them now so you're aware of what we're going to be talking about.

First off, I want to talk about what makes consequences effective. [What are the elements that actually make consequences work?](#)

The second thing I want to talk about is strategic thinking on your part as a parent to implement consequences in your home.

The third thing I want to discuss are the limitations of using consequences to get your desired behavior. Now I know that you're probably wondering what does that mean, because I should implement a consequence and I should get my desired behavior. Well, there are multiple ways to get the behavior that you want, but that comes in part, with your ability to strategically think about what it is you want from your child, what type of behavior you want.

We're going to jump into each of these three topics as we discuss how we can best help you find out the methods that you need in order to help your children.

Now, to begin all of this, we have to have a base understanding of what makes consequences effective. [There are five elements that make consequences effective.](#) Now these five elements

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were discovered through the Teaching-Family Models. So we're using the Teaching-Family Model here in the podcast with Smarter Parenting, and these are five elements that are really universal. And as a parent, if you're thinking about consequences that you want to implement and that you want to be effective for your children, you need to have these five elements in the consequence that you are delivering.

The first element is immediacy. Is the consequence immediate? Does it happen right after a behavior occurs? Now the younger your child is, the more important it is for you to follow up with the consequence. right after. That way your young child can connect the behavior with the consequence. Now, with older children, you can wait a little bit of time in between, but you want to provide a consequence immediately after the behavior if at all possible. So evaluate that. That's the first element. You want to try and provide a consequence that can be given immediately after a behavior.

The second element that makes consequences effective is the degree or size. Now how big or small the negative consequence is should match the size of the unwanted behavior. So let me give you an example. In working with a parent, for example, a parent may have a child who comes home late from a party. Say that they have a teenager return home late, and they may give the consequence of you are grounded for six months. Okay. So they're late one time, and now the parent is grounding them for six months? You have to ask yourself is that consequence equal to the misbehavior of the child? Now some parents may think, "Yeah, absolutely appropriate." However, is it really? Are we really teaching our child what it is we want them to do, which is to come home early, right? So try and match it with the behavior. If the behavior is small, use a small consequence. If the behavior is huge, let's say that they didn't come home at all, then the consequence needs to be huge. You need to find something that's bigger.

When consequences are being used, you want to be very aware of what is appropriate for your child to understand that their behavior is in correlation with the consequence. So for example, there are children that are in our group homes and when they misbehave, they are issued a consequence for their behavior. Now, when they're issued a consequence, the consequence is never too far in advance. In fact, it's always best to keep consequences within the same day. If you can keep a consequence within the same day and at a shortened amount of time, that has greater impact on your child, then say having a consequence that lasts for two weeks or two months. That is way too long for a consequence. In fact, most children cannot comprehend why one behavior that happened on Tuesday is being punished on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, so the closer you can keep the consequence to the actual behavior of your child, the better off your child is going to be in learning that that is not acceptable. Keep that in mind. It's super important for you as a parent, to keep that in mind.

[If it were me and I were coaching you right now.](#) I would say that you need to give consequences that happen in the first hour of the behavior that's happening, and the reason that we do that is to teach the child that there is a consequence for a negative behavior. Don't stretch it out. Don't make it long. You want to be able to attach these things, because

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remember, our ultimate goal is to teach children how they can improve. So you want to vary that and you want to be able to provide a consequence that the degree and the size is appropriate for the behavior, the negative behavior, that you have.

Okay. The third element for effective consequences is that it is consistent. This is the third element. It is important for you as a parent to be able to follow through with your part of delivering the consequence. If you do not follow through, what you are teaching your child is that they can get away with things sometimes, and it may be worth it to test it to see how many times they can get away with it. If you are consistent and you can follow through with the consequence every time, your child learns, "Okay, this is not going to work, because regardless of what happens, I know there's a consequence and I know my parent is going to follow through." Okay? So parents evaluate if the consequences you are giving can be consistent. Are these things that you can consistently do. Consistently do time and time again?

Now the fourth element that makes effective consequences work is importance. So the negative consequence has to be meaningful for your child. You have to find something that has value to your child. So if you have a young child who misbehaves and you are going to take away a privilege, say that they can't watch TV for an evening, that's great, but if the child doesn't care about TV, then the consequences is not going to work to teach that child what they need to do instead. So it has to be important for the child. This again requires you as a parent to evaluate what's important to my child and what can we use that will be valuable enough to help shape and shift their behavior? So importance.

The last element that is necessary to make negative consequences effective is that they need to be varied. Now switch up the consequences by using a variety of consequences for different negative behaviors. This means that you don't want to use the same consequences over, and over, and over again over a period of time. So let's say that you have a young child, you're using an Effective Negative Consequences. It's working when they're five, and then when they're 10, you try and implement it and they just don't respond to it. That means you have to vary it. You have to change it. Your child has changed. Their interests have changed. And so it's important for you to evaluate, okay, is this working? And what do we need to adjust it in order to keep it effective for my child?

So those are the five elements that work that parents need to consider when they are using Effective Negative Consequences. Let me repeat those. The Effective Negative Consequence needs to be immediate. The degree or size of the consequence needs to match the behavior. You need to be consistent as a parent to deliver that consequence. It needs to be important for your child. And the fifth thing is that you need to vary it. You need to evaluate every once in a while, is this working? Do we need to up it? Do we need to change it? Do we need to make it work?

A lot of parents will contact me and say, "Okay, what are the consequences I can give my child?" And so we go through this list. We say, "Okay, what are the things that are of interest to

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your child? And let's evaluate if they fit the five elements." [If the five elements can be found in a consequence that you are delivering for your child, then chances are that consequence is going to work to change their behavior.](#)

There is this tricky aspect when we are talking about consequences, where a child can earn back a part of the reward if they're willing to Role-play it. We've discussed this before, because our ultimate goal is to teach children how to behave appropriately. [And so if a child is willing to accept the consequence, but they're willing to Role-play how they should have behaved in that situation, then lowering the consequence is appropriate.](#) Now I know a lot of parents are thinking, "Wait a minute. That sounds so weird. Why would I do that?" Well, remember our ultimate goal is in teaching children how to behave appropriately. You're always focused on, "Let's teach our child what they should do and consequences can be a way that you can reinforce this idea."

Now you're probably thinking, "Wow, that's a lot to think about. And that's a lot to do." It is. It is. I'm not saying this is easy. I'm just saying this is effective. This is something you can absolutely do. And I promise, once you implement this type of thinking in the way that you deliver Effective Negative Consequences, you're going to find it's a lot easier and it flows a lot better as you start to consider these things in everything that you do. Okay?

So really keep those in mind. If you were thinking, "Hey, I want to correct my child's behavior. I'm going to use a consequence in order to do that. How do I make the consequence effective?" Then take into consideration all five of those elements. What you are going to discover when you do this is that you are going to weed out consequences that absolutely do not work that you were probably using and it will save you time. It will absolutely save you time.

I can't tell you how many times parents come in and say, "Well, I grounded them, and I did this, and I put him in time out." It's like, "Hey, okay. Well, let's evaluate if all the five elements exist in the way that you were delivering the consequence." [And more often than not, there are two or three elements of what makes a consequence effective missing, so then we go back to the drawing board and we evaluate, and then we come up with things that fit.](#)

Can you see how beautiful this is as far as individualizing consequences for your child? I mean, what works for another child may not work for your child, and so this is bringing it to the next level where we can individualize all of this to help your child be successful. I should just plug this in right now, because let's be honest, when you call up for coaching, when you sign up for coaching with me, this is what we do. Is we just break down the barriers, we cut right to the core of everything that you need, and we lay it out, and we say, "Okay, this is what we need to do." Saves you time. Saves you effort. Saves you pain and headache of trying to figure it out. Okay? So you can figure it out. I totally believe in you. I totally believe you can do it. However, if you want to cut through all that and you need some help in using these and having somebody to bounce those ideas off of, I am completely here for coaching.

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So anyways, we have talked about what makes consequences effective, what are Effective Negative Consequences. I've given you the five elements. Now let's talk about strategic thinking on your part. This is the part where a lot of parents and I end up discussing the majority of the time when they call in for coaching. Strategic thinking for me is having the parent really, really evaluate where they are, and what they can do in providing a consequence, and whether or not a consequence is the best way to go in addressing a negative behavior.

Let's take it, for example, a parent who calls in and says, "Hey, I have a list of consequences I want to implement for my child because my child cannot sit still." In fact, this is an example of a call that I received earlier this week. I received a call from a mother who has an 11 year old son, and he has a problem keeping his hands to himself. He has other siblings in the house, but for some reason, he just continually taps them, and bugs them, and touches them, and so the kids complain and mom has to go in and break it up, and she's on him over and over, so she wanted to implement a consequence. So while we were talking about consequences to implement, I asked her, "Okay, I need you to tell me what do you want your child to learn? What does he need to learn?" And when I asked her that, she said, "Ah, okay, I need to think here." And she had to think, because all she wanted to do was consequent the behavior. She wanted to provide a consequence for that negative behavior rather than thinking about what is it that he actually has to learn.

Now, the reason I ask that question is because it makes parents shift their mind into a more positive and resourceful state. We're no longer attacking the problem and just slapping on a consequence for it. We're actually looking at it and saying, "Okay, in what way can we help this child improve? In what way can we really deliver for this child what this child needs in order to be successful?"

So in our discussion, she discovered that what she wanted was for him to learn how to control himself and respect other people's boundaries. Okay. So now that we're going to teach to that, right? We're going to teach him how to respect boundaries. Do we need to teach him by giving him consequences to teach him that, or can we teach him that by doing other things? Now, this is where the strategic thinking comes in, because I had her go from completely giving a consequence to a child to expanding it and saying, "Okay, can we approach this problem in a new way? Can we approach this issue in a way that's different than what I was thinking at the moment?"

So we discussed it. We discussed it. So what we did is we worked in being able to provide her with some positive ways to teach him how to keep his hands to himself. How to keep his space to himself so he's not bothering other people. And we did that because of his age using a game and activity that you can find on Smarter Parenting. We have games and activities that help teach skills. But again, we did implement a consequence for the behavior, but we focused all our energy on teaching him what he needed to do to be successful, which was to keep his hands to himself.

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So strategic thinking is all about being able to evaluate whether or not the consequence is the direction you want to go in teaching your child a new behavior.

The third part of what I wanted to talk about are the limitations of consequences. Consequences can teach sometimes and they can be effective if you use those five elements. [However, like with this mother, when we look at issues that children are facing and we can approach it in a more positive and enlightened way, we actually are inviting more dialogue, and more communication, and better relationship into this whole process of helping children succeed.](#) So I am not against using consequences. In fact, I think Effective Negative Consequences are great. And if they are natural consequences that happen because of a behavior, then absolutely. Let's go ahead and use those. I think those can be very effective. However, if we can help our children by using something positive in the interaction, if we can teach them what they need to do, then why not do that, right? Why not focus in that area and help them be successful? Why don't we point out the good that they're doing and then build off of the good.

So for parents who are strictly let's just focus on the consequences, I really want you to consider the idea that consequences don't always solve everything. In fact, we have to think bigger. You have to think wider. As a parent, you have to be able to use multiple [tools](#) in order to help your children. You can't just rely on consequences to fix it. You have more tools. We are giving you more tools for free on Smarter Parenting, and so why not use those tools to help shape the behavior to what it is that you want? So if you were thinking about what consequences should do I need to give my kid? What consequences? Ask yourself that question. What do I need to teach my child? What does my child need to learn to be successful? And then you can evaluate whether or not the consequence that you were going to implement will help him get there, or whether or not that consequence will be more punishing towards you and the relationship with your child.

We've talked a lot about Effective Negative Consequences during this podcast, but it's a passionate topic. And it's a topic that seems to be coming up more and more as I receive calls for coaching. A lot of parents are calling me and asking me about what consequences they can implement for their children. And I'm like, "Okay. Let's talk about consequences. Let's put some consequences in place, but are there alternatives? Are there ways that we can teach them what they need to do instead? And if so, let's go that route as well. Why not use everything in the toolbox rather than just one big hammer." Right?

So just remember you can go back and listen what makes consequences effective are those five elements. If you are trying to figure out what a consequence should be, or look like, or what would work with your child, and you've gone through those five elements, if you can answer that, "Yeah, we can follow through with everything on the five elements and everything is good," then that's going to be an effective consequence to use for the behavior that you're trying to fix. Right?

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Now with the family, I think I need to wrap it up and explain what happened with the family that I was talking to. What we did was we implemented this idea of boundaries by establishing a bubble. Everybody in the home had a specific bubble and they went through this exercise where they had to determine how big the bubble was. How close can mom be when she's reading a book to me? How close can my sibling be if we are playing toys? And so by establishing those boundaries with all the children and the child who couldn't keep his hands to himself, they were able to address that whole issue of what she wanted her child to do, which was, "Hey, I want to teach my child to control himself, keep his hands to himself."

So that's why it's super important for us to be able to evaluate the benefits of using consequences, but also the limitations. There are limitations to it, unless they're natural, of course, but just be aware of that. Parents, evaluate and figure it out and work it out, and by being able to do that, you're going to find that you can make your consequences effective, but you're also going to have additional tools to help you address the behaviors that you want to address.

Now, that's it for me for this week. Tune in again next time, and we'll talk a little bit more, but I do want to give a plugin. If you want and need help, [contact me for coaching](#). We are absolutely willing. I am here to listen to and to help you find the solutions that you need in order to help your child. All right? That's it for me. I'll talk to you later. All right. Thanks. Bye.

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[Ep #60: Moving from consequences to rewards](#)

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