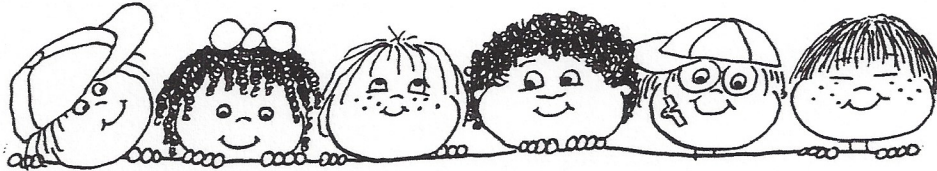


Twenty Alternatives to Punishment by Aletha Solter

Preface by Nicole Shimshock

As a former high school teacher, I was always looking for different ways to teach the wide variety of students coming through my classroom. I considered my constantly growing repertoire of teaching and disciplinary techniques as my "bag of tricks". The bigger your "bag of tricks" is, the better equipped you'll be to handle the many situations which occur in the life of a teacher. As a stay at home mom, I felt that my "bag of tricks" in handling the many situations which present themselves in raising my own children was very limited. Time-outs were not always effective and tended to breed resentment, spanking was out of the question, and yelling just made me feel bad about my parenting skills. I have over the past six years of motherhood, improved my bag of tricks considerably. This list of "Twenty Alternatives to Punishment" has been on my refrigerator for the past four years. It is by Aletha Solter and I have no idea which publication it came from. It has been extremely helpful in dealing with the many misbehaviors that have come down the pike, and I hope you find it helpful in improving your own bag of parenting tricks.



- **Give information and reasons.** If your child colors on the wall, explain why we color on paper only.
- **Look for underlying feelings.** If your child hits his baby sister, encourage him to tell you why he is upset, and help him express his anger and jealousy in harmless ways.
- **Change the environment.** (It's easier than trying to change the child.) If your child repeatedly takes things out of the kitchen cupboards, put a childproof lock on them.
- **Find acceptable alternatives, and redirect your child's behavior.** If you do not want your child to build a fort in the dining room, tell her where she *can* build one.
- **Demonstrate how you want your child to behave.** If your child pulls a cat's tail, show her how to pet a cat. Do not rely on words alone.
- **Give choices rather than commands.** Decision making empowers children; commands invite a power struggle. Try: "Would you like to brush your teeth before or after putting on your pajama?"
- **Make small concessions.** "I'll read you an extra story tonight to help you settle down for sleep."
- **Look for underlying needs.** Nine out of ten times misbehavior is a form of communication. Pay attention to what your child needs (attention, rest, food) and this will help defuse the situation.
- **Provide a period of preparation.** If you are counting on company for dinner, tell your child how you expect him to behave. Be specific. Role-playing can help prepare for potentially difficult situations.
- **Let natural consequences occur (when appropriate).** Don't rescue too much. A child who does not hang up her bathing suit and towel may find them still wet the next day. However, don't ruin the natural consequence by saying "I told you so!"
- **Use logical consequences (only if necessary).** If while holding your child, he wiggles so much that he kicks you, explain that it hurt, set him down, and offer to hold his hand instead.
- **Give I-messages.** "I get so tired of cleaning up crumbs in the living room."
- **Hold, hold, hold.** This expression of love enables children who are acting aggressively or obnoxiously to channel their pent-up feelings into healing tears.
- **Remove your child from the situation,** and stay with her until she is ready to act appropriately. Use the time for listening, sharing feelings, and moving towards conflict resolution.
- **Be playful.** Turn the situation into a game. "Let's pretend we are the seven dwarfs while we clean-up."
- **Do it together.** If your child refuses to take a bath, offer to take with him.
- **Make a deal, negotiate.** If you're ready to leave the playground and your child is having fun, reach an agreement on the number of times she may go down the slide before leaving.
- **Defuse the situation with laughter.** If your child is mad at you, invite him to engage in a playful pillow fight. Play your part by surrendering dramatically. Laughter helps resolve anger and feelings of powerlessness.
- **Revise your expectations.** Young children are naturally loud, curious, messy, willful, impatient, demanding, forgetful, fearful, self-centered, and full of energy. Try to accept them as they are.
- **Take a parental time out.** Leave the room, and do whatever is needed-cry, call a friend, meditate, take a shower, read a poem-to regain your sense of composure and good judgment.