



CONSEQUENCES: CONNECTING BEHAVIOR AND OUTCOMES

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Behaviors lead to outcomes, or **consequences**. We sometimes think of a consequence as something bad. Or something that follows a behavior we don't want to see. But, it can also be something good that happens after a positive behavior.

This strategy is all about helping your child see that there is a connection between what they do and what happens next (outcomes). This includes noticing how their actions make others feel!

A **consequence** is something (good or bad) that happens after a **behavior** that makes that **behavior** more or less likely to happen.

- ◆ Some consequences happen *naturally*. Then you can help your child connect them to their actions:
"You put your coat and shoes on quickly! Now we have more time to play outside."
- ◆ Or consequences can be something *you decide on* to encourage your child to do something:
"If you keep the toy on the table, then you can play with it. If you throw it, it could break or hurt someone. Then you'll have to choose something else to play."

Pointing out outcomes helps your child see the relationship between their behavior and what happens *after* it. When you tell your child the consequences for a behavior beforehand, it helps them know their options. This supports them to choose actions that lead to more positive outcomes.



HOW TO AND TIPS:

Connect behaviors and outcomes during the day:

1. Notice and connect your child's behaviors to what happens after (both positive and negative).
 - Positive examples:**
 - "You cleared your plate and cup. *Now you are ready to go play.*"
 - "I see you using gentle hands! *You're keeping everyone safe.*"
 - Negative examples:**
 - "You threw the toy so it broke. *Now we can't play with it anymore.*"
 - "You hit them. *They didn't like the way it felt. So, they want to play somewhere else.*"

Get ready ahead of time:

2. Think about your use of consequences. How often do you give your child negative consequences? You can plan for ways to avoid this by:
 - Focusing on giving choices during the day.
 - Making sure your child knows what you are asking and can do it.
3. Think of behaviors you want to encourage. Think of related consequences. Having these ready will help you remember to point out or give fair consequences in the moment.

Deciding if you need to use a consequence with your child in-the-moment:

4. Stop and think: *Can* your child do what you are asking them to right now? Do they *understand* their choices?
5. Take a breath and remain calm. Use a supportive voice to describe your child's options. Explain what will happen after each choice.
 - Use "if-then" statements. Tell your child what *you'd like them to do*. Then *what will happen if they do it*. For example, "Keeping the water in the bath tub keeps us from slipping. **If** you keep the water in the tub, **then** you can stay and play longer. **If** you keep splashing water out, **then** you'll need to finish and dry up."
 - Give your child time (around 5 seconds, or longer depending on the child) to make a choice.
 - Make sure consequences:
 - **Make sense**. For your child to make the connection between their action and the outcome, that link must make sense! For example, having a child clean up the toys that they threw is a logical consequence. Taking away outside time as a consequence for the same behavior isn't.
 - **Are reasonable**. The outcome should not be harsh or severe. It should also be something you can follow through with.
 - **Happen right after the behavior**. When a consequence happens a long time after your child's action (such as taking something away the next day), it is harder for them to connect the two.
6. Follow through.
 - Notice and give praise when your child chooses the positive behavior.
 - If they don't choose the positive behavior, make sure to follow through with the consequence. It is better not to say you are going to give a consequence than to say you will and end up not giving it.
 - Be sure to give your child another chance to be successful as soon as possible!



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Connecting Behavior and Outcomes at Home

- ◆ Clearly state what you would like your child to do before or during an activity. Also, be clear about the consequences. For example, "If you keep your slime on the table, you can keep playing with it. If you put it on the floor again, we'll put it away."
- ◆ Point out natural consequences. For example, "You shared your toys with your friend! You both had so much fun playing together. Now they want to keep playing with you."
- ◆ Connect outcomes to actions. For example, "You were running in the house and bumped into them. When you run inside, it's easy to accidentally knock someone over. That's how they got hurt."



LOOK at you: You are the expert on your child. We'd love to hear from you! What connections do you hope your child makes between their actions and outcomes? How does your family support your child to connect their behavior and outcomes?