

Natural and Logical Consequences

A consequence is the result or the outcome of an action:

A **natural consequence** is the realistic outcome of an action – for example if you drop a glass it will break, which is a natural consequence of dropping the glass
Logical consequences are the consequences we create to mirror natural consequences.

When setting consequences for children of any age, they should be *logical*.

For example, the natural consequence of leaving a bike out for a long period of time could be that it gets stolen.

If you want to set a consequence that logically flows from that natural consequence, then the consequence for leaving a bike out may be that the child loses his bike privileges for a while.

Logical consequences should ideally be *concrete*. The younger the child, the more you want to set concrete consequences.

For example: Telling a child *“I am very disappointed in you for hiding that bad grade from me,”* although painful, is not tangible enough for most children to fully understand. Furthermore there is no natural consequence set here for disappointing you.

However, the following provides both a natural consequence and a logical outcome that is concrete. *“Because I am disappointed, I cannot trust you, for that reasons I have to keep a closer eye on you, a) you will check in with me every night about your homework and grades, and b) you are grounded at home for the weekend.”*

It takes some thinking and sometimes some creativity to come up with logical consequences.

Example: Little Susie refuses to brush her teeth

Natural consequence: tooth decay (which of course you cannot allow)

Logical consequence: no more treats because they promote tooth decay and as long as she cannot take care of her teeth she can't have that privilege



Example: Little Mickey becomes aggressive when he gets angry

Natural consequence: no one wants to play with him, someone gets hurt, or someone bigger will hit him back.

Logical consequence: Since Mickey can't control his behavior he can't be trusted as openly – Mickey has to play indoors only, and alone until he learns to control himself.

Consequences should be immediate and consistent. If you cannot implement them immediately, you should warn the child that the consequence is coming. Outside of exceptional circumstances you should always follow an unwanted behavior with an appropriate consequence. If you let a child get away with something once, you reinforce their belief that they can get away with it in the future.

Never, ever set a consequence you will not carry through. Never go back on a consequence, unless you went way overboard. Here are some examples of things not to do/say:

"You are grounded for one month!"

At Disneyland with the whole family: "If you don't stop we are leaving!"

"You will never get to watch TV!" or "No TV for two weeks!"

Unless you are prepared to withstand them bugging you for the whole two weeks don't do this.

Unless you mean it don't say it. If you do happen to set a consequence in anger and it is too harsh, do set the right example for your child; come up to them, explain that you were unreasonable and you set another more reasonable one.

