

**DAY  
13**

*Guide*



## DAY 13 *Guide*

When it comes to discipline, the sad truth is that most of us are doing it wrong. This is because our focus in discipline is on punishment, rather than teaching.

The best discipline focuses on the development of personal strength in children, and it is done in a way that suggests parents are pre-disposed to look with compassion on their children... to help them learn.

In the 21 Days book, I shared that when a child can't read, we teach; when a child can't swim, we teach; but when a child can't behave correctly, we... punish.

It's a tough act. We're supposed to balance the use of our power and authority to enforce reasonable limits with our desire to help our children learn and act responsibly for themselves.

The fact is that we know better. We are wiser than our children. We are bigger than our children. We have more experience than our children. We need to help our children with limits. And our children... well, all they want is freedom!

To discipline effectively, I suggest we focus on four key principles:

1. Always work to understand what is really going on.
2. When asking children to do something, ensure they understand why it matters.
3. If there is a clash between our limit and their desire, problem-solve together. Collaborate to work it out.
4. As much as possible, minimise the use of controlling techniques. >

I make it a point to do all I can to not get my children in trouble. It's bad for our relationship. I'm not trying to be their friend. I'm trying to be their parent – teaching, guiding, supporting, instructing, and helping them to develop personal strengths and positive characteristics.

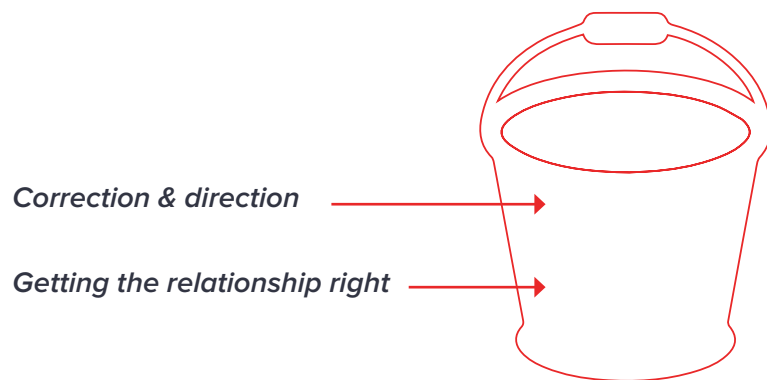
And the best way to do that is by example – especially in the way I talk with them and set limits with them. One of my favourite authors, Alfie Kohn, talks a lot about the need to work with our children rather than do things to them.



## ACTIVITY #1

### *Get the relationship right*

The diagram below shows an empty bucket. Take a moment to read the two labels that describe what is in the bucket.



At the top of the bucket is correction and direction – what we give our children to help them act in good, kind ways – and at the bottom, ‘Getting the relationship right’.

Imagine you were asked to place water into the bucket in direct proportion to the amount of time you spend in your relationship with your children that's focused on correction and direction versus time spent on getting your relationship with them right. For example, if you think about 50 per cent of your interactions with your children are focused on correction and direction, place a line at the halfway point in the bucket. If you feel you spend nearly ALL your time on correction and direction, perhaps you would place the line 80-90 per cent of the way towards the bottom.

In my work with parents, most of them immediately draw a ‘relationship’ line that symbolises a splash in the bucket – it feels like the majority of their time is spent telling the children what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and that they'd better hurry up and do it! And there is a problem with this approach.

Discuss or write:

Where do you draw the line? What does it tell you about the quality of your relationship with your children?

Discuss the following questions with your spouse/partner.

1. What were the typical “discipline” strategies used in your home growing up, when you were a child?
2. What are your typical “discipline” strategies in your home now, with your own children?
3. As you have worked through this parenting program, have you found that your children have been easier to deal with, harder, or the same as usual?
4. As you reflect on the kind of family you want to have (your vision), and the kind of people you all want to be (or the principles you want to live by), how do your typical “discipline” strategies help you or hinder you?
5. How has this session challenged your thinking about discipline? What do you think you might do differently as a result of this session?



