



The School of Life SA

Life Skills Coaching Workbook

Parenting Skills

Family Rules and Healthy Discipline: A Guide for Positive Parenting

A Free Resource from The School of Life SA

Creating a structured and supportive home environment is essential for raising well-adjusted children. This workbook guides you through establishing clear family rules and using healthy discipline strategies that promote respect, responsibility, and self-discipline — in a way that works for neurodivergent families too.

How to Use This Workbook

1. Read Section 1 to understand the principles of establishing effective family rules.
2. Work through Section 2 to explore healthy discipline strategies and how to apply them.
3. Review Section 3 for tips on building responsibility and respect in your home.
4. Use Section 4 to understand the six types of healthy consequences and when to use them.
5. Complete the reflection and planning activities to apply these strategies in your family.

⚠ Disclaimer: This workbook is a self-reflection coaching tool and not a psychological assessment or diagnostic measure. If you have concerns about your child's behaviour or wellbeing, please consult a qualified professional.

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Free Resource — May be printed or shared for personal and coaching use.

The Power of Family Support

Children thrive in warm, supportive, and structured environments.
Families that foster motivation tend to be consistent, encouraging, and accepting.

Section 1: Establishing Family Rules

Family rules help create consistency and set clear expectations for behaviour. Follow these five principles to develop effective rules that your whole family can get behind.

<p> A. Keep Rules Simple and Clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use short, specific rules that are easy to understand. Example: "Use kind words" instead of "Don't be rude." 	<p> B. Set Age-Appropriate Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Younger children need simple rules with immediate consequences. Older children can handle more detailed expectations — chores, schedules.
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<p> C. Involve Children in Rule-Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When kids help create rules, they feel more responsible for following them. Discuss the reasons behind each rule so they understand its importance. 	<p> D. Be Consistent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce rules fairly and consistently to establish trust and structure. Avoid making exceptions too often, as it may lead to confusion.
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E. Model the Behaviour You Expect

- Children learn best by observing adults.
- If you want them to use polite language, demonstrate it yourself.

Section 1 Activity — Our Family Rules

Work together as a family to write your household rules below. Aim for 3–6 clear, positive, and achievable rules.

Rule #	Our Family Rule
1	
2	
3	



4	
5	
6	

How did involving your children in rule-making go? Notes:



Section 2: Healthy Discipline Strategies

Discipline should guide children toward better behaviour rather than punish them harshly. Effective discipline teaches self-control, responsibility, and problem-solving skills.

★ A. Use Positive Reinforcement

Praise good behaviour to encourage more of it.

Example: "I love how you helped your brother clean up. That was very kind."

⚖️ B. Set Logical Consequences

Make sure consequences relate to the behaviour.

Example: If a child refuses to do homework, they lose TV time until it's completed.

🕒 C. Time-Outs for Reflection, Not Punishment

A short break allows kids to calm down and think about their actions.

Example: Time-outs should match the child's age (e.g., a 5-year-old gets a 5-minute break).

🗣️ D. Avoid Yelling or Harsh Punishments

Shouting or physical punishment creates fear rather than respect.

Example: Stay calm and use firm but gentle communication to correct behaviour.

🗃️ E. Offer Choices When Possible

Giving children options helps them feel in control while still following rules.

Example: "Would you like to do your homework before or after dinner?"

🕒 F. Be Patient and Understanding

Children learn through repetition and guidance.





Example: Mistakes should be seen as opportunities to teach rather than punish.

Reflection — Which discipline strategies do you currently use most?

Which strategies would you like to use more consistently?

Section 3: Encouraging Responsibility and Respect

In addition to setting rules and applying discipline, it is important to foster a culture of respect and responsibility at home. These four pillars help create an environment where children feel valued, heard, and guided.

 Teach Accountability	 Practice Problem-Solving	 Hold Family Meetings	 Lead with Love
<p>Encourage kids to take responsibility for their actions and make amends when they break rules.</p>	<p>Help children think of solutions when conflicts arise, instead of simply punishing them.</p>	<p>Regularly discuss rules and expectations as a family to reinforce their importance.</p>	<p>Discipline should always come from a place of care and guidance, not frustration or anger.</p>

Activity — Family Meeting Planner


Use this space to plan your next family meeting about rules and expectations.

Agenda Item	Notes / Plan
Which rules to review	
Any concerns to discuss	
Positive things to celebrate	
Changes to agree on together	


Section 4: Healthy Consequences for Inappropriate Behaviour

Discipline should teach accountability, problem-solving, and self-regulation — not just punishment. The goal is to help children understand how their actions affect others and guide them toward better choices.


1. Natural Consequences (When Safe to Allow)

 Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Child refuses to wear jacket → feels cold, learns to dress appropriately. → Leaves toys outside → toys get dirty or broken, learns to care for belongings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the consequence is safe and not harmful. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the lesson is obvious and logical. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it helps build responsibility and independence. <input type="checkbox"/> If the behaviour puts them or others at risk (e.g., traffic, hot stove).

2. Logical Consequences (Directly Related to Behaviour)

 Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Refuses to clean up after playtime → loses access to those toys. → Draws on walls → must help clean it up. → Teenager keeps coming home late → curfew is temporarily moved earlier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When a clear link exists between the behaviour and the consequence. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the child can fix or repair the issue. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it teaches accountability and responsibility. <input type="checkbox"/> If the consequence is too harsh or not directly related to the behaviour.

3. Loss of Privileges (Temporary and Proportionate)

 Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Rude language online → loses screen time for the day. → Misbehaving at dinner → temporarily loses the privilege of choosing the next meal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the privilege is related to the misbehaviour. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it is short-term and not overly harsh. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the child understands how to earn back the privilege. <input type="checkbox"/> If the consequence feels random or is too extreme (e.g., all toys removed for a week for a minor offence).

4. Time-Out for Self-Regulation

 Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
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<p>→ Tantrum → given a calm space (not isolation) to relax until ready to talk.</p> <p>→ Hits a sibling → they don't play together until both are ready to be gentle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When emotions are high and need de-escalation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the child chooses to take a break rather than being forced. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it includes a follow-up discussion afterward. <input type="checkbox"/> If it feels like a punishment rather than a chance to regroup and reflect.
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5. Restorative Consequences (Making Amends)	
Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
<p>→ Breaks a sibling's toy → helps fix it or contributes to replacing it.</p> <p>→ Is mean to a classmate → writes an apology or does something kind for them.</p> <p>→ Disrupts family time → takes on an extra chore to restore balance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When a child needs to understand the impact of their actions. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it promotes empathy and problem-solving. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it helps repair relationships. <input type="checkbox"/> If the child is forced into an apology without meaning it.

6. Positive Reinforcement for Good Behaviour	
Examples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When to Use / <input type="checkbox"/> When Not to Use
<p>→ Shares toys nicely → gets to pick the next family movie.</p> <p>→ Completes homework without complaints → earns extra playtime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When building consistent positive habits. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When the child needs encouragement to make better choices. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When it helps boost self-esteem and motivation. <input type="checkbox"/> If rewards are too frequent or too big, making the child expect prizes for basic behaviour.

Final Thoughts — The Four Pillars of Healthy Consequences

 Fair and Proportionate	 Consistent	 Respectful	 A Learning Opportunity
The consequence should fit the behaviour.	Follow through every time so the child learns boundaries.	Discipline should teach, not shame.	Help the child understand how to make better choices.



Section 5: My Positive Parenting Plan

Use this section to reflect on what you have learned and create a personalised action plan for your family. Small, consistent changes make the biggest difference over time.

The family rule I most want to establish or strengthen:

The discipline strategy I want to use more consistently:

One behaviour I want to respond to differently — and how:

A positive behaviour I want to reinforce this week:

How I will involve my child in rule-making:

My Positive Parenting Commitment This Week

I commit to...



I will review my progress on:



Discipline is not control.

It is guiding your child back to their best self.

Every consistent, loving response is a brick in the foundation of who they will become.



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