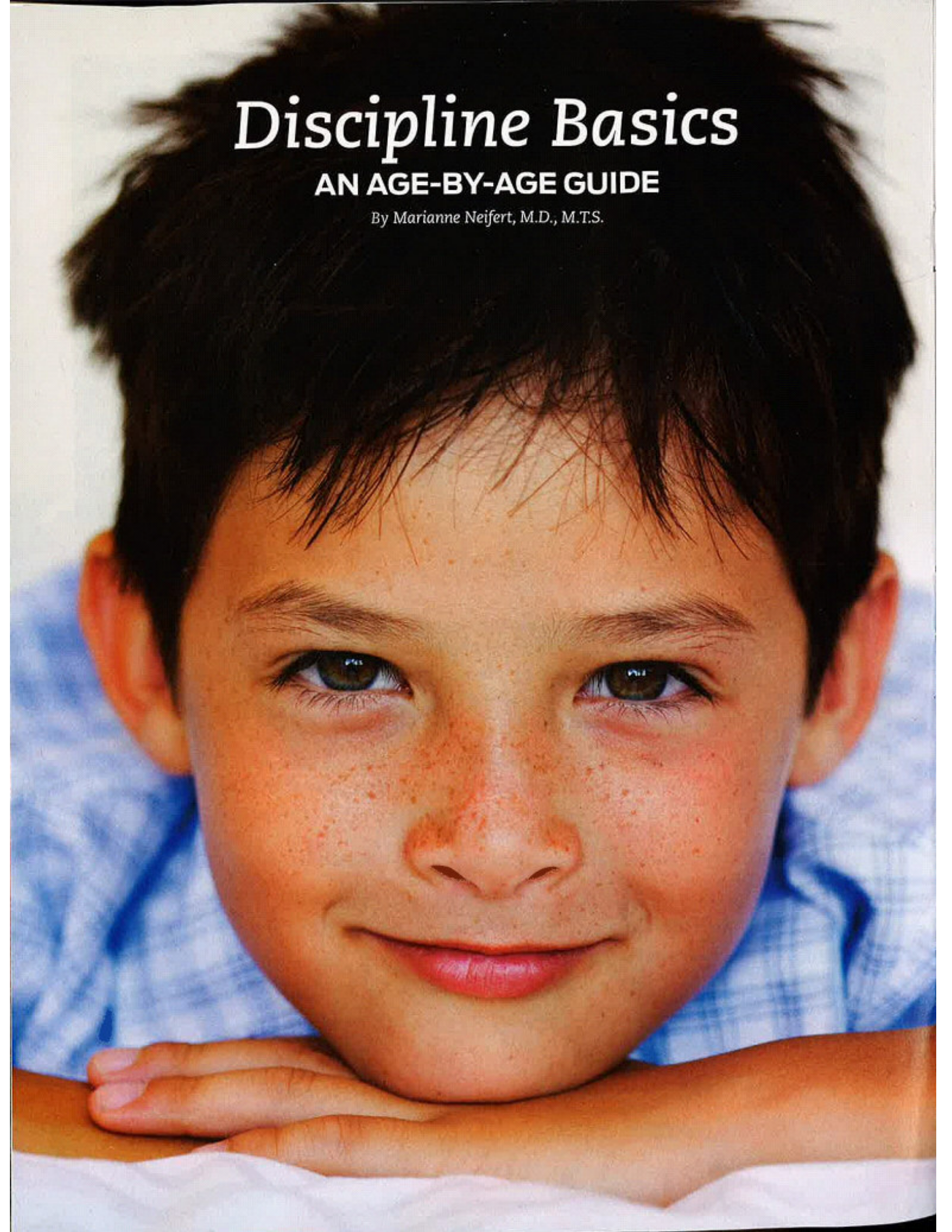


Discipline Basics

AN AGE-BY-AGE GUIDE

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Choosing an effective strategy for shaping your child's behavior depends on his age, temperament, and the specific problem behavior. Discipline is always easier with a warm, loving, supportive parent-child bond.

Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers

- * Daily routines for eating, sleeping, and playing provide structure and predictability for young children. Familiar routines reduce misbehavior by helping a child know what is expected.
- * Infants and toddlers need constant supervision and a baby-proof environment for safe exploration. When Baby heads toward an off-limits item, say "no" and redirect his attention to an acceptable activity.
- * Because toddlers lack the verbal skills to express intense emotions, they act out their frustration in the form of tantrums. Give your child words to express emotions, saying: "You are (*angry, mad, sad*) because ...". Remain calm when your child is in the throes of a tantrum. He can learn from your self-control.

Guidelines for Preschoolers

- ✦ Preschoolers readily imitate adults, so set a good example of self-control, respect, cooperation, and kindness. Desired behavior is best promoted by giving immediate positive reinforcement — smiles, hugs, compliments, praise, attention, or stickers. Praise the specific behavior you want to encourage.
- ✦ Consistency is crucial for shaping behavior. Consistently enforce rules and limits. Offer an acceptable behavior when correcting misbehavior: "No hitting! Use your words to say what you want."
- ✦ Around age 2, imposing a time out in a quiet, subdued location can interrupt misbehavior and help a frustrated child regain self-control. Time out is especially effective for impulsive, aggressive, or other antisocial behavior, such as biting, hitting, or emotional outbursts. A good rule of thumb for time out is one minute per year of age. Give plenty of individual attention, or "time in," when your child is behaving well.

Guidelines for Elementary-Aged Children

- ✦ Briefly withdrawing a privilege that is logically linked to your child's misbehavior can be instructive. For example, your 10-year-old can't use his bike for the rest of the day if he was riding without a helmet.
- ✦ Imposing a consequence is more effective when you remain calm and express genuine empathy. Don't get angry, give your child a "tongue lashing," or impose an overly harsh penalty. Over-punishing is demoralizing and keeps your child's focus on being angry rather than on his inappropriate behavior.
- ✦ Refuse to get drawn into a power struggle with your child. Power struggles do not promote cooperation, responsibility, or problem-solving. Withdraw from the conflict and acknowledge your child's difficult feelings. When both of you have calmed down, you can discuss the problem behavior. ☺

DISCIPLINING IN PUBLIC

- Explain how you expect your child to behave. For example, he must remain in his seat at the restaurant.
- Enforce a time out or other consequence when your child's behavior is unacceptable. Drive to a safe location and stop your car until your children stop fighting.
- Be prepared to cut your trip short and return home if your child misbehaves. Calmly explain that you will not take him on future outings until he can find his self-control.

