

[Nonviolent Child Discipline](#)

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PARENTING

Nonviolent Child Discipline

Raising world-class citizens, from crib to college

Fitzhugh Dodson was a high school teacher turned child psychologist whose personal quest in life was to find nonviolent ways to deal with the growing waywardness of youth. His widow told Hinduism Today that his three children--now happy, successful adults--are living testaments to his parental acumen. From his years of hands-on experience Dodson wrote a series of immensely popular parenting books. *How to Discipline with Love [From Crib to College]* particularly shines with its broad, creative scope of child-raising methods. "Once you understand the true nature of discipline," said Dodson, "you quickly see the inadequacy of a single system"--hence his multi-faceted approach. "Discipline is a process of teaching that goes on all the time" is Dodson's guiding concept. "When we discipline children, we are teaching them two things: to use desirable behavior, and to avoid undesirable behavior." Unfortunately, discipline to most people means physical punishment.

Dodson offers a practical toolbox of methods drawn from actual cases in his profession or from his own rearing of three very different children. Here is a listing of several. The feedback technique: listening closely to the thoughts,

concerns, complaints and upset feelings of your children, then repeating the words back in a way that makes them feel you understand what they are talking about, but are not judging them. Time outs: A period of time, depending upon the child's age, when they are calmly sent to a boring place to cool down after a fight or chore mutiny. Contracting: Carefully working out agreements between parents and children linking good behavior and parent-given privileges. Family council: Regular weekly meetings to air and reconcile family disharmony.

Dodson's book arose from the experiences of real-life American families, and some of his methods are drastic. In the chapter "How to Use Parental Muscle," he offers "last-ditch" techniques necessary in extreme cases to bring order to some families. The "Parental Strike," for example, is just that. No groceries, no family meals, no money--until the child agrees to abide by the family rules.

Half the book is devoted to the methods of discipline appropriate to each of eight developmental stages, from "infancy" to "late adolescence." "It is very important for parents to have a good grasp of the stage of development their child is in," writes Dodson. "Without such an understanding, they will have a difficult time intelligently disciplining the youngster. For example, sibling rivalry between a nine-year-old and an eleven-year-old is vastly different from rivalry between a two-year-old and four-year-old."

To raise a well-adjusted child, you will want to refer to this book time and again.

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