The Basis of Effective Discipline

Your Relationship with Your Child

Discipline works best when there is good parent-child communication and a warm, supportive relationship. You don't have to be your child's best friend, but the more solid your relationship, the easier it is to discipline. If your relationship has experienced a disruption, take time to re-build your relationship. You don't always have to teach or guide or control – sometimes you can just enjoy being with this incredible human being who is your child!

Understanding Your Own Emotions

Children can really push buttons! The more aware you are of your own emotions, the better in control you will be when your child makes you angry. If you're returning from a deployment, you'll likely experience a wide range of emotions. Work to identify your various feelings – put a name to them and spend some time thinking about how you can be aware of these reactions as you discipline your child. The better you get at controlling your emotions, the better parenting decisions you will make.

Understanding Your Child's Emotions

Children and teenagers are learning how to handle intense feelings and emotional pressures. Often their misbehavior is connected to their emotions. For instance, your child may refuse to go to school because they are worried about taking a test. If you only focus on the behavior ("Get to school, young lady, or else!"), you miss the opportunity to help your child learn how to cope with their various emotions, worries and insecurities.

Working Together with Your Child's Other Parent

Children benefit from parents parenting "together." If you've been apart, your child has become used to their other parent's rules and discipline. With your return to active parenting, work together with your child's other parent. Your child will naturally resent sudden changes to rules or expectations. Talk with the other parent and older children about what is working now and discuss possible changes. Take the time to get to know your child again as they are now. Take it slow, and realize the goal is for you again to be an active, fully engaged parent in your child's life.