

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Content

Frequently Asked Questions (p. 2-5)

Quick Parenting Assessment (p. 6)

Algorithm with Scripts (p. 7)

Discharge Instructions (p. 8-9)

Appendix: QPA Education and Resource Station (p. 10-12)

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Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

QPA Frequently Asked Questions

What is the QPA?

The QPA is a parent-support tool that integrates healthy discipline education into the pediatric primary care visit. The QPA is designed to improve children's socioemotional health, improve parent/child relationships, and prevent disease (Figure, page 5). Exposure to potentially unhealthy discipline is associated with many physical and mental health problems including child abuse, violence, depression, drug use, suicide attempts, heart disease, lung disease, and obesity. An important step to improve children's health is to support parents' use of healthy discipline strategies.

What does the QPA measure?

The QPA assesses for a child's recent exposure to five potentially unhealthy discipline strategies that, if used excessively, are associated with adverse outcomes (questions 2-6, 8-12): 1) overuse of punitive discipline, 2) speaking angrily/yelling, 3) threatening, 4) physical punishment, and 5) humiliating language. The QPA also screens for two positive discipline questions (questions 1 and 7): 1) redirecting and 2) spending more time with the child to explain expectations. When discussing results with parents, health care providers should consider starting the conversation with what parents are doing well (questions 1 and 7).

Who should be screened and when?

The QPA is designed for parents of young children, ages 1-10. Studies demonstrate that parents begin using unhealthy discipline early in a child's life. We recommend screening every couple of years, starting when children are young. In our clinic, we administer the QPA to parents at the 15 month, 30 month, 5 year, and 8 year well visit.

How does the QPA work?

Parents answer 12 "Yes/No" questions that assess how their child has been disciplined in the previous month. Seven questions ask about the discipline practices of the presenting parent. Five questions ask about the discipline practices of other caregivers, giving health care providers valuable insight on the discipline practices of caregivers who do not attend the clinic visit. During the well child visit, health care providers review the survey and respond with an appropriate level of intervention using an algorithm with suggested scripts, evidence-based resources, and discharge instructions.

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

QPA Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Does the QPA require a lot of time?

Compared to other parenting assessment tools, the QPA is a time-saver. In a survey of U.S. pediatricians, “lack of time” was the most frequently reported barrier to educating parents about healthy discipline strategies. The QPA takes about 1 minute to complete. [Clinicians can respond to low QPA scores in 15-20 seconds and elevated scores in 1-2 minutes. There is evidence that 1-minute interventions can affect parenting practices and reach parents who do not attend the clinic visit.](#)

Do health care providers currently address discipline in primary care?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that health care providers address discipline, but many parents report that they receive no information about parenting. Some health care providers do provide education about healthy discipline; however, without a parenting assessment, it may be challenging to determine the right level of support needed for an individual parent. [Pediatric providers are currently missing opportunities to support parents – less than 20% of parents who are using potentially unhealthy strategies receive support.](#)

Has the QPA been tested/validated?

Yes. [The QPA has been tested and validated.](#) Compared to low QPA scores, high QPA scores are associated with a 9-fold increased risk for childhood behavior problems.

How can health providers avoid emotional conversations?

Sometimes, discussions about parenting can become emotional. This does not mean that discussions should not happen. There are many ways to keep emotions low. Here are some tips:

- **Explain why:** “Thank you for completing this form. We want all parents to know about healthy discipline strategies. This is because we know that how parents discipline their children can affect children’s behavioral, emotional, and physical health. Also, how you discipline can affect your relationship with your child.”
- **Inject humility:** “Parenting can be humbling, and no parent does it right 100% of the time.”
- **Build strengths and assets:** “When I review your form, I see that you are using some of the best strategies to discipline your child – redirecting (q 1), spending more time with your child and setting expectations (q 7).”
- **Be flexible and patient:** For example, if the parent is using unhealthy discipline options but responded that they did not want to discuss discipline, you might say, “We have learned a lot over the years about many healthy discipline strategies such as redirecting. From the form you filled out, it looks like you are not ready to discuss these great discipline options today, but, in the future, I would be happy to discuss these with you. I am convinced it could help your family.”

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

QPA Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Are parents reported for child abuse if they screen positive?

Absolutely not. The QPA may identify a child who is at increased risk of child abuse, but it does not diagnose child abuse. The questions in the QPA were carefully developed such that no response or set of responses result in a report of child abuse. All parents use potentially unhealthy discipline strategies from time to time. The QPA is not designed to identify “bad” parents or child abuse; rather, it is designed to be supportive and non-stigmatizing. The QPA helps parents be the best that they can be.

What about social desirability bias?

Some parents may not answer QPA questions accurately because of social desirability bias or another reason. However, this is not too concerning because, even if the QPA is not answered accurately, parents receive the message that parenting is important for their child's health and are reminded of parenting behaviors that are better than others. The QPA is both an assessment and educational tool.

What about assessing exposure to other adverse childhood experiences?

Other childhood stressors include exposure to divorce, mental illness, incarceration, poverty, and bullying. The QPA is designed to be used alone or combined with other tools such as the Pediatric ACEs Algorithm, a more comprehensive ACEs assessment tool that includes other childhood stressors and parents' current and past stressors. The QPA was developed as a stand-alone tool because time constraints may prohibit health care providers from using more comprehensive ACEs assessment tools and to facilitate the completion of follow up QPAs.

Is there a cost to use the QPA?

See copyright disclaimer on page 1.

How can I access forms and learn more about how to use the QPA?

www.QuickParentingAssessment.org

Whom can I contact to learn more about the QPA?

For inquiries about using the QPA, research, or collaboration, please email:
seth.scholer@vumc.org

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

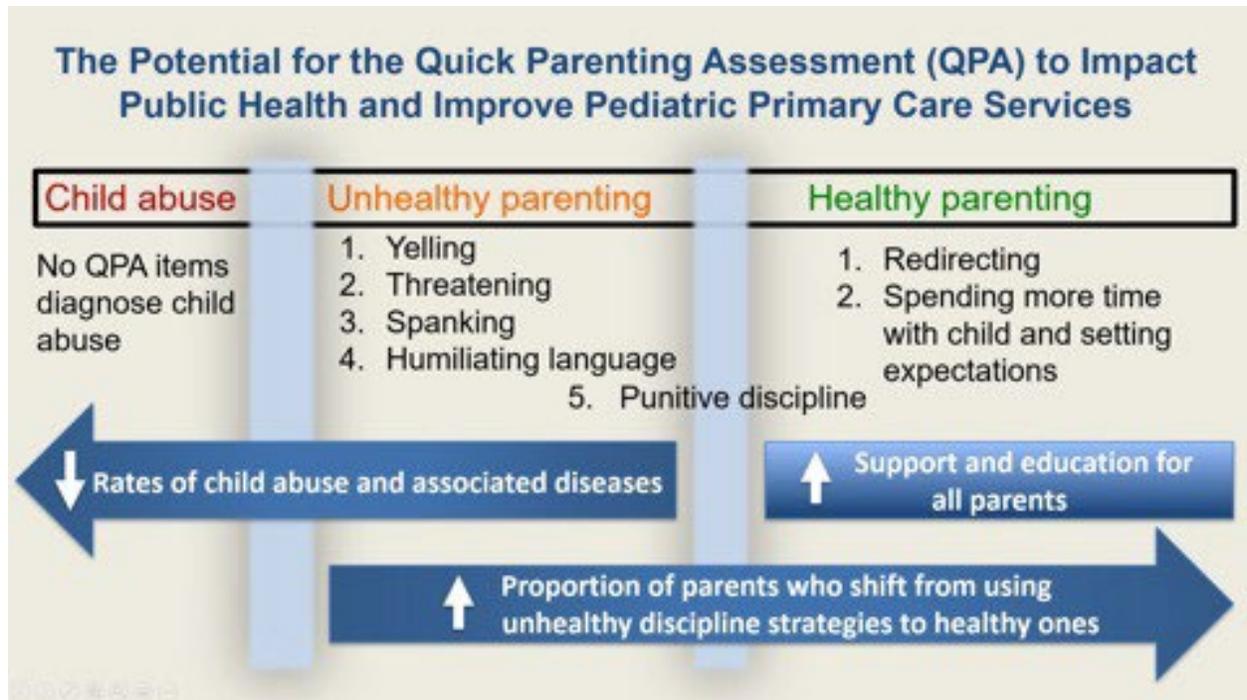


Figure: The potential for the QPA to impact health. In theory, a parenting assessment, integrated into pediatrics and linked with effective interventions, could 1) reduce rates of child abuse and diseases associated with child abuse, 2) increase the proportion of parents who shift from using unhealthy discipline practices toward healthy ones, and 3) improve support and education for all parents by including positive discipline strategies. [Notes: Blurry lines separate child abuse, unhealthy parenting, and healthy parenting. The QPA is not a child abuse screening tool - no QPA items diagnose child abuse. The QPA’s five unhealthy parenting items and two healthy parenting items are listed. Punitive discipline, straddling the line, is sometimes recommended but can be unhealthy if overused.]*

*Sausen K.A., Randolph J.W., Casciato A.N., Dietrich M.S., Scholer S.J. [The Development, Preliminary Validation, and Clinical Application of the Quick Parenting Assessment](#). *Prev Sci.* (2021). [Full text]

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Date: _____

Name of your child: _____ Age of your child: _____

What is your relationship with your child? Mother Father Grandparent Other

We want to help you be the best parent you can be. Parents use many options to discipline their children and no parent does it right 100% of the time. The QPA is a non-judgmental tool. It is designed to support you, strengthen your relationship with your child, and improve your child's health. It will never be used to shame you or get anyone into trouble. To support you and your child, please let us know what YOU and OTHER CAREGIVERS do, not what you *think* you should do.

In the past month, what have YOU done when your child needed to be disciplined?

1. You redirected your child toward a good behavior. For example, you said something like: "Don't bite people, use your teeth to eat food" or "Don't kick the dog, let's go kick a ball" or "Help me around the house with your hands".	Yes	No
2. In general, more than once per day, you used time-out or took away privilege.	Yes	No
3. In general, more than once per day, you spoke angrily or raised your voice.	Yes	No
4. You told your child that he/she is going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	Yes	No
5. You gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	Yes	No
6. You told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	Yes	No
7. You spent more time with your child to talk about or show them how to improve behavior.	Yes	No

In the past month, what have your child's OTHER CAREGIVERS done when your child needed to be disciplined? SKIP questions 8-12 if you are the only caregiver.

8. In general, more than once per day, they used time-out or took away privilege.	Yes	No
9. In general, more than once per day, they spoke angrily or raised their voice.	Yes	No
10. They told your child that they are going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	Yes	No
11. They gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	Yes	No
12. They told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	Yes	No

We want to support you.

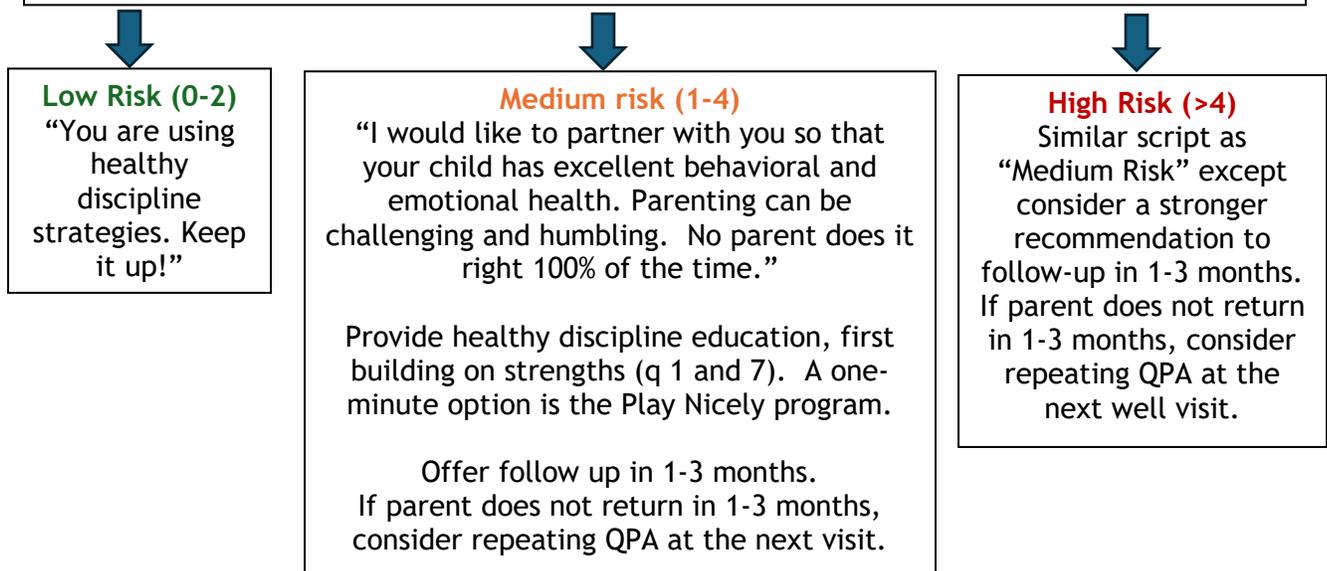
13. I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior.	Yes	No
14. I would like resources about healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior.	Yes	No

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Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Algorithm

Scoring: Q 1 and 7 should be “Yes”. Only score questions 2-6, 8-12; all should be “No”.
Script: “Thank you for filling it out the form about how you discipline. This form is important because how you discipline can affect your child’s emotional, behavioral, and physical health. Discipline can also affect your relationship with your child.”



Scoring tips: Score 1 point for each at-risk response. Score only questions 2-6 and 8-12. Questions 1 and 7, both positive parenting behaviors, can be reviewed but do not need to be scored. If a parent answers “No” to all questions, consider literacy issues and/or whether the survey was completed accurately. Questions 13 and 14 gauge parents’ interest in receiving support.

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Health care providers usually give written discharge instructions to patients. Below are examples of text that could be provided to parents as part of the QPA. At Vanderbilt University Medical Center, our electronic health record, EPIC, uses Smart Phrases in the After Visit Summary (AVS) [i.e. discharge instructions for parent]

.QPALOW:

Healthy Discipline: Our goal is for your child to have excellent emotional and behavioral health. A first step is for parents to use healthy discipline strategies. You are doing it! Keep it up!

Healthy discipline resources:

www.playnicely.org
www.cdc.gov/parents
www.zerotothree.org

.QPAMEDIUM

Healthy Discipline: We want to support you to help your child have excellent emotional and behavioral health. A first step is for parents to use healthy discipline strategies. Your child will likely have better behavioral health if you and your child's other caregivers use the best discipline strategies to respond to behavior problems.

Although there is no one right way to respond to behavior problems, some discipline strategies work better than others. Try to avoid spanking, yelling, or threatening or saying "No" too much because these do not teach children what they are supposed to do, and these strategies can be unhealthy for your child. First, take the time to explain the rules, using good eye contact. Then, one of the best discipline strategies is to redirect a child toward a more positive behavior. For example, if your child hits another, redirect your child to go build blocks, throw a ball, or help you around the house. If your child kicks, have them go kick a soccer ball or run up and down the hall with their feet. Redirecting works great because you give your child attention, and at the same time, you teach them what they can do, not what they can't.

To learn about healthy ways to discipline, please view the Play Nicely multimedia program at home on your computer or smart phone (see www.playnicely.org). You can check out the Play Nicely Healthy Discipline Handbook from the Family Resource Center on the 2nd Floor of the Doctor's Office Tower. Show the program to everyone who takes care of your child. Your child will behave better if everyone is consistent with discipline. Please use the strategies in the program and come back to see me in 1-3 months, especially if you have any questions about healthy discipline options or your child's behavior.

Healthy discipline resources:

www.playnicely.org
www.cdc.gov/parents
www.zerotothree.org

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

.QPAHIGH:

Healthy Discipline: We want to support you to help your child have excellent emotional and behavioral health. A first step is for parents to use healthy discipline strategies. Your child will likely have better behavioral health if you and your child's other caregivers use healthy discipline strategies to respond to behavior problems. Although there is no one right way to respond to behavior problems, some discipline strategies work better than others. Try to avoid spanking, yelling, or threatening or saying "No" too much because these do not teach children what they are supposed to do, and these strategies can be unhealthy for your child.

First, take the time to explain the rules, using good eye contact. Then, one of the best discipline strategies is to redirect a child toward a more positive behavior. For example, if your child hits another, redirect your child to go build blocks, throw a ball, or help you around the house. If your child kicks, have them go kick a soccer ball or run up and down the hall with their feet.

Redirecting works great because you give your child attention, and at the same time, you teach them what they can do, not what they can't.

To learn about lots of other healthy ways to discipline, please consider viewing the Play Nicely multimedia program at home on your computer or smart phone (see www.playnicely.org). You can check out the Play Nicely Healthy Discipline Handbook from the Family Resource Center on the 2nd Floor of the Doctor's Office Tower. Show the program to everyone who takes care of your child. Your child will behave better if everyone is consistent with discipline. Please use the strategies in the program and come back to see me in 1-3 months.

Healthy discipline resources:

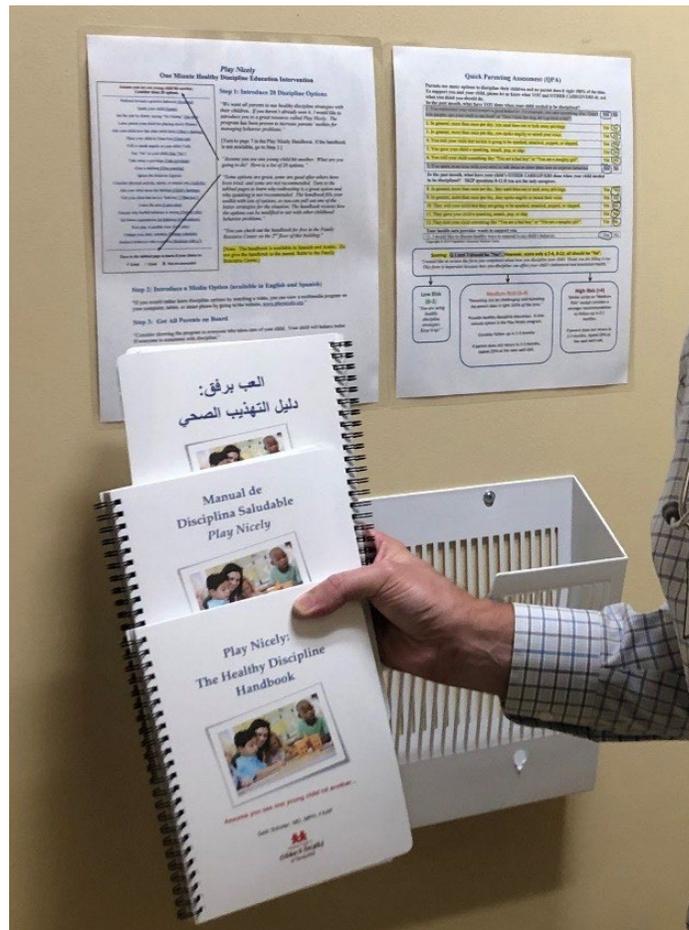
www.playnicely.org

www.cdc.gov/parents

www.zerotothree.org

If available, consider including a list of community parenting classes and support groups.

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)



QPA Education and Resource Station:

Clinicians need training to use the QPA and to respond to positive screens. A QPA Education and Resource Station, created on a wall in clinic, can help with both. At Vanderbilt, parents can check out the Play Nicely handbook from the Family Resource Center. We have found it helpful to clinicians to have the following two pages laminated and placed above a bin containing the handbooks.

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

We want to help you be the best parent you can be. Parents use many options to discipline their children and no parent does it right 100% of the time. The QPA is a non-judgmental tool. It is designed to support you, strengthen your relationship with your child, and improve your child's health. It will never be used to shame you or get anyone into trouble. To support you and your child, please let us know what YOU and OTHER CAREGIVERS do, not what you *think* you should do.

In the past month, what have YOU done when your child needed to be disciplined?

1. You redirected your child toward a good behavior. For example, you said something like: "Don't bite people, use your teeth to eat food" or "Don't kick the dog, let's go kick a ball" or "Help me around the house with your hands".	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
2. In general, more than once per day, you used time-out or took away privilege.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
3. In general, more than once per day, you spoke angrily or raised your voice.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
4. You told your child that he/she is going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
5. You gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
6. You told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
7. You spent more time with your child to talk about or show them how to improve behavior.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

In the past month, what have your child's OTHER CAREGIVERS done when your child needed to be disciplined? SKIP questions 8-12 if you are the only caregiver.

8. In general, more than once per day, they used time-out or took away privilege.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
9. In general, more than once per day, they spoke angrily or raised their voice.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
10. They told your child that they are going to be spanked, smacked, popped, or slapped.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
11. They gave your child a spanking, smack, pop, or slap.	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
12. They told your child something like "You are a bad boy" or "You are a naughty girl".	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

We want to support you.

13. I would like to discuss healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
14. I would like resources about healthy ways to respond to my child's behavior.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

Scoring: Q 1 and 7 should be "Yes". Only score questions 2-6, 8-12; all should be "No".

Script: "Thank you for filling it out the form about how you discipline. This form is important because how you discipline can affect your child's emotional, behavioral, and physical health. Discipline can also affect your relationship with your child."



Low Risk (0-2)
"You are using healthy discipline strategies. Keep it up!"



Medium risk (1-4)
"I would like to partner with you so that your child has excellent behavioral and emotional health. Parenting can be challenging and humbling. No parent does it right 100% of the time."

Provide healthy discipline education, first building on strengths (q 1 and 7). A one-minute option is the Play Nicely program.

Offer follow up in 1-3 months.
If parent does not return in 1-3 months, consider repeating QPA at the next visit.



High Risk (>4)
Similar script as "Medium Risk" except consider a stronger recommendation to follow-up in 1-3 months. If parent does not return in 1-3 months, consider repeating QPA at the next well visit.

Quick Parenting Assessment (QPA)

Play Nicely One-Minute Healthy Discipline Education Intervention*

Step 1: Introduce 20 Discipline Options

“We want all parents to use healthy discipline strategies with their children. If you haven’t already seen it, I would like to introduce you to a great resource called Play Nicely. The program has been proven to increase parents’ toolkits for managing behavior problems.”
[Turn to page 7 in the Play Nicely Handbook. If the handbook is not available, go to Step 2.]*

“Assume you see one young child hit another. What are you going to do?”

Here is a list of 20 options.”

“Some options are great, some are good after others have been tried, and some are not recommended. Turn to the tabbed pages to learn why redirecting is a great option and why spanking is not recommended. The handbook fills your toolkit with lots of options, so you can pull out one of the better strategies for the situation. The handbook reviews how the options can be modified to use with other childhood behavior problems.”

“You can check out the handbook...” [Note: if the handbook is not available to check out in your clinic or resource center, parents can purchase the handbook online or view the free multimedia program.]

Step 2: Introduce a Media Option

“If you would rather learn discipline options by watching a video, you can view a multimedia program on your computer, tablet, or smart phone by going to the website, www.playnicely.org.”

Step 3: Get All Parents on Board

“Consider showing the program to everyone who takes care of your child. Your child will behave better if everyone is consistent with discipline.”

Step 4: Follow up

“If you have any ongoing concerns about your child’s behavior or about how to discipline your child, please come back and see me in 1-3 months.”

*Over a dozen published studies attest to the effectiveness of the Play Nicely program.

Assume you see one young child hit another.
Consider these 20 options.

Redirect toward a positive behavior (Redirect)
Spank your child (Spank)
Set the rule by firmly saying “No Hitting” (Set rule)
Later, praise your child for playing nicely (Praise)
Ask your child how the other child feels (Other’s feelings)
Place your child in Time-Out (Time-out)
Yell or speak angrily at your child (Yell)
Say “No” to your child (Say “No”)
Take away a privilege (Take privilege)
Give a warning (Give warning)
Ignore the behavior (Ignore)
Consider physical activity, sports, or martial arts (Activity)
Ask your child about his feelings (Child’s feelings)
Tell your child that he is a “bad boy” (“Bad boy”)
Leave the area (Leave area)
Discuss why hurtful behavior is wrong (Discuss why)
Set future expectations for behavior (Expectations)
Role play at another time (Role play)
Change your daily schedule (Change schedule)
Redirect behavior with a question (Redirect with a ?)

Turn to the tabbed page to learn if your choice is:

✔ Great ✔ Good ✘ Not recommended

Image: Page 7 of the Play Nicely Healthy Discipline Handbook