

Dialogue Sheet:

Consequence vs. Punishment

Purpose: This sheet helps parents transition from using language that shames, blames, or controls (punishment) to language that teaches responsibility, competence, and cause-and-effect (consequence).

BNE Focus: Punishment focuses on the child's identity ("You are bad"). Consequence focuses on the action and the repair ("The action caused this result").

PART I: RESPONDING TO A MISTAKE OR ACCIDENT (AGES 2-6)

Scenario	Punishment Phrase (Focuses on Shame/Identity)	Consequence Phrase (Focuses on Action/Repair)
Child spills milk.	"You were careless! Why can't you be more careful? Now go sit in time-out."	"Uh oh, milk needs to be cleaned up. Let's get the towel. This happens when the cup is too close to the edge."
Child hits a sibling.	"Stop being mean! We don't hit people. That's a naughty thing to do. Now I'm taking your toy."	"Hitting hurts. When you hit, we need to take a break until your body is calm. Do you want to check if [Sibling] is okay?"
Child rips a book.	"You are destructive! You always ruin things. Now we can't read books for a week."	"Books are delicate. When we rip them, they get broken. Now we need to stop reading this one and try to repair the page together."
Child refuses to tidy up blocks.	"If you don't clean up right now, I'm throwing them all in the trash."	"The blocks stay out when we don't put them away. That means they'll be sleeping in the box until tomorrow's play time."



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PART II: SETTING AND ENFORCING LIMITS (BEFORE A CRISIS)

Scenario	Punishment Phrase (Focuses on Threat/Control)	Consequence Phrase (Focuses on Choice/Autonomy)
Setting a screen time limit.	"If you don't give me the tablet when I say so, you won't get to watch it tomorrow."	"You have a choice: You can hand me the tablet now, or you can choose to take a break from screen time tomorrow."
Child is running inside.	"Stop running this instant! If you run again, you're going straight to your room."	"Running happens outside. If your feet need to run, we go outside. If you choose to run inside, your feet need a break on the sofa."
Child refuses to put on their shoes.	"We aren't going anywhere until you put your shoes on! I'm leaving you here."	"We leave when your feet have shoes. Your feet need shoes to go outside. We will wait here until they are ready."

THE KEY DISTINCTION: YOUR INTERNAL DIALOGUE

Use this quick check to assess your phrase before you speak:

Punishment	Consequence
Focuses on...	Identity (shame, blame).
Asks...	"Why are you always so
Goal is...	To make the child feel bad so
BNE Insight	Communicates: "I don't accept

Practice Tip: Whenever you hear yourself about to say "Why did you..." or "You always...", stop and replace it with a phrase that starts with "This happens when..." or "Let's fix it."