

Conscious Discipline  
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Giving Age Appropriate Choices  
from Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline  
By Dr. Becky Bailey

All children can benefit from being offered two positive choices, but the choices must be age appropriate. It would be foolish to offer young children unlimited choices. If you tell your child to pick out one toy in the store, you may be there until closing. Then, too, your child might pick a toy costing \$69.95, while you planned on spending about \$5.00.

Parents must structure choices for children because too many decisions are overwhelming to children. You must stay in control of yourself and in charge of your children. In giving your child choices, consider his/her age, temperament, and the specific situation. The following guidelines will help you provide children with choices.

Offer children under the age of five a choice between two predetermined events or objects. It works like this:

- Clothing: "You have a choice: You may wear the blue shirt or the red shirt."
- Food: "you have a choice between orange juice and milk."
- Activities: "You have a choice: You may build with blocks or draw."
- Compliance "You have a choice: You can pick up either your clothes or your toys. Which do you pick?"

NEVER offer a young child a choice about the following:

- Daily Schedule ("Are you ready for bed?")
- Adult Activities ("Could mommy leave you with daddy now and go shopping?")
- Relationships ("Would you like to spend Christmas with Dad or Mom?")
- Situations that put the child or others in danger.