

Story thanks to
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The Gender DIVIDE

Boys and girls brains develop differently. To fully understand how to discipline children you need to be aware of this and customise your approach for each gender, particularly when they're younger, writes **Jutta Dempsey**.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that male and female brains are wired differently. Boys love video games and girls love facebook and when you understand how their brains develop this makes absolute sense. These differences also mean that girls and boys require different approaches to discipline in order to be effective.

The left side of the brain is responsible for logic, math, and analytical reasoning, details and overseeing the three R's (reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic).

The right side of the brain governs emotions, intuition, insight, music comprehension, perception, visual-spatial processing, not getting lost, and recognising familiar places.

The healthy brain can switch from left hand to right hand as needed.

As our children grow they are developing at different rates and so are their brains. If we keep this in mind as we are parenting, we can avoid many pitfalls.

Girls develop their verbal centres in the left side of the brain much more quickly than boys. This is why girls are able to use a wide variety of language and link these with feelings much earlier than boys. For this reason discipline methods such as praise and verbal reasoning will work much better with girls than with boys. This also explains why as girls enter pre puberty, they spend a lot of energy on communication and relationships.

On the other hand boys are busy developing the right side of their brain, exploring their environment, taking physical risks and being action oriented. This has developmental consequences that are particularly noticeable as they start school. Boys have more difficulty settling into school – they seem not to listen, have more difficulty in attending, they have less self control and slower language and fine motor skills. Added to this, the recent acceleration of curriculum has magnified these differences in brain development. Whereas once children could be working with clay, sand and playground equipment to help them acclimatise to the school environment, many children are now exposed to visual/auditory learning at a much earlier age.

Boys are five times more likely to be diagnosed with a "disorder" (including ADHD, Sensory Integration, Oppositional Defiance) than girls. Bearing all this in mind it makes sense to find ways to discipline your children based on their brain development.

When disciplining girls it is more effective to focus on feelings and communication. You can use longer sentences and more complex language. By contrast, the best approach with boys is to be practical, solve the problem and move to action. Stop aggressive behavior amongst boys by quickly giving them an alternative action to do.

Here is a summary of how you can handle some typical behavior difficulties with younger children:

BEHAVIOUR	GIRL	BOY
Sharing	"You will make him so happy if you let him join your game"	"When you let her join in you will build it twice as fast."
Tantrum	"You do not have to be upset, tell me quietly and we will fix it so that you feel better".	"Sit down on the step and tell me what you need."
Whining	"You have a sad face on today. What can you do to feel happy right now?"	"Please go and get your new lego toy for me."
Hitting	"How would you feel if you were treated in that way? What can you do to make it better?"	"Hands to yourself and use your words." Or if it has happened before, "time out".

This will probably make a lot of sense to most parents but there is also an extra component to add to the mix – mums and dads brains also work differently. As you discipline your children you also need to be conscious of your own way of thinking, particularly as you discipline a child of the opposite sex.