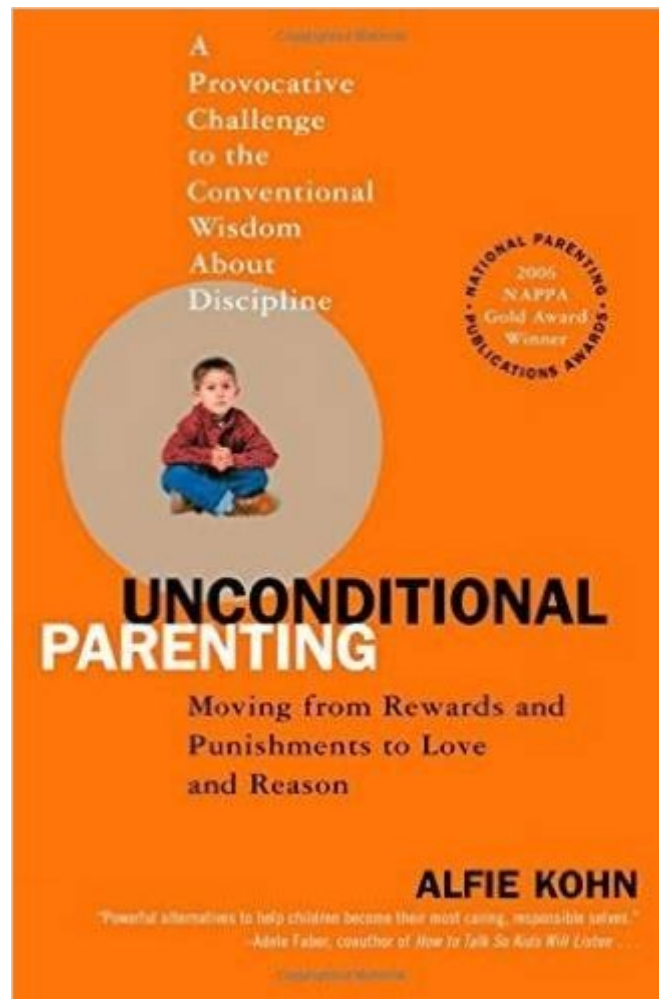


The book was found

# Unconditional Parenting: Moving From Rewards And Punishments To Love And Reason



## Synopsis

Most parenting guides begin with the question "How can we get kids to do what they're told?" and then proceed to offer various techniques for controlling them. In this truly groundbreaking book, nationally respected educator Alfie Kohn begins instead by asking, "What do kids need?" and how can we meet those needs? What follows from that question are ideas for working with children rather than doing things to them. One basic need all children have, Kohn argues, is to be loved unconditionally, to know that they will be accepted even if they screw up or fall short. Yet conventional approaches to parenting such as punishments (including "time-outs"), rewards (including positive reinforcement), and other forms of control teach children that they are loved only when they please us or impress us. Kohn cites a body of powerful, and largely unknown, research detailing the damage caused by leading children to believe they must earn our approval. That's precisely the message children derive from common discipline techniques, even though it's not the message most parents intend to send. More than just another book about discipline, though, *Unconditional Parenting* addresses the ways parents think about, feel about, and act with their children. It invites them to question their most basic assumptions about raising kids while offering a wealth of practical strategies for shifting from "doing to" to "working with" parenting—including how to replace praise with the unconditional support that children need to grow into healthy, caring, responsible people. This is an eye-opening, paradigm-shattering book that will reconnect readers to their own best instincts and inspire them to become better parents.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Overall, I'm glad I read it, as it is a thought-provoking read that ultimately made a better parent just by grappling with the issues it presents. Here is what I liked about it: Kohn emphasizes teaching empathy, teaching kids about the effects their behavior will have on OTHER people, not just on themselves; teaching kids to behave because it's the right thing to do, not out of fear of punishment or desire for reward. This is an extremely important and useful concept that many parenting books neglect. I think many of his observations about "conditional" parenting are spot on, and things I remember painfully from my own childhood. Everything he says is well-documented, not just his own spouting opinion. I think he is especially brave to take on race, religion and culture when he makes his assertions. I find his information about self-esteem to be particularly relevant. I like that he allows hardworking parents to cut themselves a slice of slack. The world is not going to come to a crashing halt if your child sees you fumble. I have a three-year-old, and his advice about three-year-olds is helpful in the practical sense. There truly ARE many times when I feel like yelling at my child, "Are you dense?!" only to have Kohn's words echo back at me, "I'm not dense! I'm THREE!" A lot of this information is reassuring and helps me to be more calm and patient. Finally, he advises parents to take his own advice with a grain of salt, something most parenting gurus won't do. He acknowledges that there are times when your child needs a bath or you need to get out of the house by a certain time and you will have to impose your will on the child and there isn't a way around that.

I've been meaning to read this book for quite awhile, and finally got around to checking it out at the library last week. On the front cover it says, "A provocative challenge to the conventional wisdom about discipline," and that is certainly true. In the first few chapters, he discusses what he calls "conditional parenting." The premise of the book is that kids need to feel that they are loved unconditionally. This is not the same thing as their parents loving them unconditionally; most parents believe that they do that. The child has to not only BE loved unconditionally, but FEEL loved unconditionally. Mr. Kohn is opposed to punishment as a form of discipline, suggesting that parents instead look at circumstances where traditional parents punish as an opportunity to work towards solving the problem \*with\* the child, rather than doing something \*to\* the child. He looks at one very popular form of punishment these days: the time-out. The way this is often done, he says, is a form of love withdrawal. "You do something I don't like, and I isolate you until you conform." What may be even harder to wrap your mind around is that when it comes to unconditional parenting, praise is just the other side of the punishment coin. He says that praise implies that we approve of our children more when they behave in ways we like, and that they begin doing things in order to get

praise, rather than because they're the right things to do. Both praise and punishment create feelings of insecurity and self-centeredness, and everything becomes about what will be done to them or for them if they do x, y, or z. He also looks at how we define "success." And most importantly, he talks about long-term goals. What do we want for our children in the long term?

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