

HOW TO DISCIPLINE AN IMAGINARY FRIEND

1 Outline responsibility.

Explain to your child and the imaginary friend that when they play together, they both need to be on good behavior and are both responsible for any broken vases, stolen cookies, or messes.



Explain to your child that both he and his imaginary friend are responsible for their bad behavior.

2 Assign consequences to the child and imaginary friend together.

Tell your child that he and his imaginary friend must wash dishes or take out the trash “together.”

3 Ask your child to suggest ways to make his friend behave.

Explain that you need his help in making his friend understand and behave.

4 Create activities to keep the imaginary friend out of trouble.

If the imaginary friend is a continuing source of mischief, enroll him in (imaginary) music lessons, (imaginary) summer camp, or (imaginary) boarding school to keep him occupied.

Be Aware

- Do not make up an imaginary friend for your child as a way to encourage his imagination.
- Respond respectfully to your child's imagination and imaginary friend.
- If you are visiting someone, such as a boss, who may be uncomfortable with your child's notion, tell your child that his friend will have to wait in the car, or that you hired a “babysitter” for the child's friend to watch him at home.