

discipline



FOR

YOUNG

CHILDREN

Discipline & Punishment--

What Is The Difference?

LESSON 2

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pt. 2
c. 3

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Lesson 2 Discipline & Punishment: What is the Difference?

Effective discipline helps the child learn to control his own behavior so that he acts according to his ideas of what is right and wrong, not because he fears punishment. For example, he is honest because he thinks it is wrong to be dishonest, not because he is afraid of getting caught.

The purpose of punishment is to stop a child from doing what you don't want--and using a painful or unpleasant method to stop him.

There are basically four kinds of punishment:

- .physical punishment - slapping, spanking, switching, paddling, and using a belt or hair brush.
- .verbal punishment - shaming, ridiculing, using cruel words, saying "I don't love you."
- .withholding rewards - "You can't watch TV if you don't do your homework."
- .penalties - "You broke the window so you will have to pay for it with money from your allowance."

The first two kinds of punishment, physical and verbal, are not considered to be effective discipline methods. The other two, withholding rewards and penalties, can be used either as effective discipline methods or as punishment--depending on how parents administer them. They will be discussed in a later lesson.

Mild Or Harsh?

It is important to look at the way parents administer physical punishments. A light slap on the hand or a quick swat on the seat of the pants does not affect a child like a severe spanking.



"You broke the window so you will have to pay for it."

A swat on the bottom is a mild physical punishment. Few parents raise their children without resorting to it. Raising children is hard work, and sometimes parents can really get upset by their children's behavior. If parents have a good relationship with the child and if the child knows he has misbehaved, mild physical punishment does no harm to him. While the mild punishment may do no harm, it does not help the child develop a conscience. Parents should use mild physical punishment as little as possible. If they find themselves using it frequently, then something is wrong and their method of discipline is not working. They may as well admit that spanking is more effective in relieving the parents' frustration than in teaching the child self-control. More effective methods are needed.

Harsh physical punishment and verbal abuse can never be justified as ways to discipline children. Parents usually spank when they are angry; a parent may not realize how hard he is striking the child. Verbal abuse hurts the child's concept of himself.

Not As Effective

Some parents, because of their religious beliefs, use spanking as a discipline method. They say that it works and has no ill effects on children. The following information, therefore, does not apply to those parents. It is true that what is successful for some parents and their children may not be successful for others. But if you are having problems with your children and your present ways of disciplining them are not working, consider the following information.

Physical punishment usually doesn't work for several reasons. First, it makes the child hate

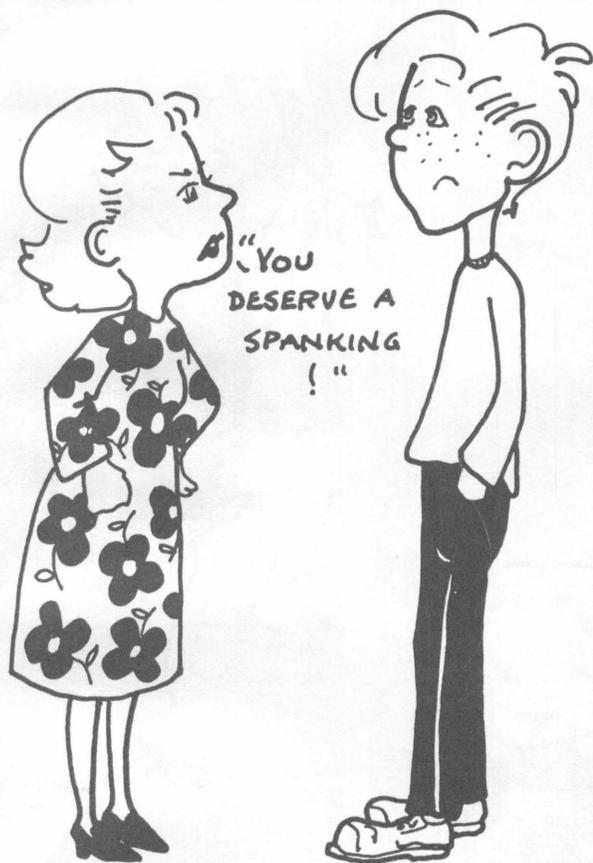


himself and others. Physical punishment makes the child think that there must be something awfully wrong with him to be treated so badly. If he thinks he is "bad," then he will act "bad." A vicious cycle is formed. The child who has been treated harshly has no reason to be good. Or he may be good just to keep from being punished and not learn to be good because he thinks it is the right thing to do.

Children who have been spanked feel that they have paid for their misbehavior and are free to misbehave again. In other words, spankings free the child from feelings of remorse which are needed to prevent future misbehavior.

Parents who use physical punishment are setting an example of using violence to settle problems or solve conflicts. Children imitate their parents' behavior. When parents use physical punishment, children are more likely to use violent acts to settle their conflicts with others.

Another disadvantage of using physical punishment is that parents have to find other discipline methods when the child becomes as tall and as strong as the parent! Why not start using effective discipline methods when the child is young?



Why Do Parents Spank?

Parents who spank their children rather than using other discipline methods usually say:

- "Nothing else works."
- "You've got to let kids know who is boss."
- "They asked for it."
- "It clears the air."
- "I was spanked and I turned out OK."

Reasons for spanking which parents seldom give are:

- They are mad at their husband or wife and take it out on the child.
- They are angry and don't stop to think of better ways to discipline.
- They don't know how to discipline more effectively.
- It relieves their feelings of frustration.
- It is easier, quicker, and requires less thinking than other discipline methods.

Some parents spank because they place a high value on obedience. Their whole aim is for the child to "mind," to do what he is told without question. There are times when a child needs to obey instantly, such as when he reaches for the hot stove or starts to run in front of a truck.

Effective Discipline...

Helps child learn self-control
Can be used with teenagers
Builds child's self-esteem
Sets good example of way to solve problems.

Harsh Punishment...

Child learns to deceive parents
Won't work with teenagers
Damaging to self-esteem
Teaches child that violence is the way to solve problems.



When obedience is the parents' main objective, however, the child becomes passive and loses his zest for life.

The question of spanking is an emotional issue which parents feel very strongly about. They can be divided into one of three groups. They think either:

- (1) "Spare the rod and spoil the child."
- (2) "I can't imagine anyone laying a hand on a poor defenseless child."
- (3) "Other kinds of discipline are more effective."

Parents who spank ask, "What's wrong with it?" It isn't a question of right or wrong, but of what is best for the child. Perhaps parents who spank frequently should ask themselves:

Why do I use spanking as the only way to discipline my child?

Does spanking work?

How did I feel when I was spanked as a child?

Did it make me stop doing what I was spanked for, or--

Did I sneak around and try not to get caught doing it?

Usually parents' attitudes toward physical punishment reflect their religious beliefs and their ideas about what children are like. Child development educators believe that the child is born neither good nor bad; they have the possibility of becoming good or bad according to the traits

they inherited from their parents, how they are treated, the kind of experiences they have, and their reaction to their environment. Since these educators believe that children are not naturally bad, they think children need to be disciplined in ways which help them learn to do what is "right" rather than be punished.

Harsh punishment causes resentment.



Effective discipline helps the child have a good attitude.



If You Punish

Some parents choose to use physical or verbal punishment rather than more effective discipline methods. If you do use this method to discipline your children, keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. Always ask the child why he misbehaved before you punish. Allow him to explain. Children don't think like adults and his motive may not have been a "bad" one.
2. Always tell the child why what he did was wrong before you punish him. Children are not mind readers. They may not know why you disapprove and they are much less likely to repeat the behavior if they understand why you think it is wrong.
3. Always tell the child what behavior you expect of him in that situation. Don't assume children know what you expect of them.
4. Be consistent. Children don't know how to behave if you punish them one time and turn your head the next.
5. Make the punishment no worse than the misbehavior. If a child comes home late for dinner one time, it makes no sense to make him stay inside every afternoon for a month. Ask yourself: "Am I punishing him for his own good or for mine?"
6. Administer punishment calmly. You can't think clearly when you are angry and upset and you may punish too severely, whereas you may tell the child he can't watch TV for two days if you waited till you calmed down.
7. Deal with misbehavior as soon as you have calmed down. No waiting "till daddy gets home."
8. Punish in private. Never punish a child in front of anyone, even his brother or sister. It embarrasses him and causes resentment. He may continue to misbehave to save face.
9. Always follow through. If you tell the child he cannot watch TV for two days, be sure that he does not watch TV for two days--no matter how hard it is on you.

Parents who use harsh punishment rather than more effective discipline methods should be aware that some of the worst behaving children are those who are punished often. They behave at home, but are "holy terrors" elsewhere.

Use physical punishment as a last resort, if you must. Educators recommend, however, that it not be used after children reach school-age. First, try using the more effective discipline methods described in the remaining lessons to change your child's behavior. It will take time and effort and lots of thinking. But you will like the results--a happier you and a happier child. When parents learn more effective ways to discipline children, there is less need for spanking or hitting.



SEE HOW MUCH YOU HAVE LEARNED!

Place a check by the phrase which best completes the sentence.

1. Harsh punishment teaches a child
 - a. self-control.
 - b. to use violence to solve problems.
 - c. to respect his parents.

2. Effective discipline methods help children learn
 - a. to behave according to their ideas of right and wrong.
 - b. to be sneaky and not get caught misbehaving.
 - c. to fear their parents.

3. Child development educators think that children are born
 - a. bad.
 - b. good.
 - c. with the possibility of becoming either good or bad.

4. Parents who punish their children should
 - a. give the child a chance to explain.
 - b. give no explanation for the punishment.
 - c. give them extra privileges to show them that they love them.

ANSWERS
1. b
2. a
3. c
4. a

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Take a good look at the way you discipline your children this week. Make a note below of each occurrence.

What the child did:

What I did:

2. Then, ask yourself: "Did the discipline or punishment work?" "Would I do the same again?" "Can I think of a better way to handle it next time?"



A RECORD OF MY DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTS*

Complete one week after studying Lesson 2.

Check the blanks that apply to you.

The way I usually discipline:

- | | | | |
|-------|------------------------|-------|--|
| _____ | Yell and scream | _____ | Isolate |
| _____ | Explain reasons calmly | _____ | Spank |
| _____ | Remove privileges | _____ | Let the child suffer
the consequences |
| _____ | Shame my child | _____ | Threaten, but don't
follow through |
| _____ | Show disapproval | _____ | Distract |
| _____ | Ignore misbehavior | | |
| _____ | Scold | | |

During the past week, I:

- | | More | Less | About the same |
|--|-------|-------|----------------|
| Acted calmly | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Acted firmly and kindly | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Used kind words, not
unkind words | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Let the child learn
from the consequences | _____ | _____ | _____ |

The atmosphere in our home has changed to one of:

- | | More | Less | About the same |
|---------------|-------|-------|----------------|
| Friendliness | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Cooperation | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Understanding | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Confusion | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fun | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Hostility | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Tension | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*Adapted from Practical Education for Parenting by Kent G. Hamdorf,
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