

Parenting for Success Class #1

Punishment vs. Teaching



Introduction

How do you parent?

Discipline is commonly misunderstood. As parents, we may each take a different approach to discipline. This may include punishment, correction, and/or guidance.



Consider these questions

- Do you find yourself arguing with your child?
- Do you often correct him or her?
- Do you make your child promise not to do something again?
- Do you fight with your child a lot?
- Do you sometimes respond with a large punishment for a relatively minor misbehavior?
- Do you ever threaten actions you know you won't carry out?
- Do you say things to your child that you later regret?
- Do you repeat instructions several times?
- Do you give in to your child's demands?
- Do you find that the more you punish, the more your child misbehaves?



Consider these questions

If you answered "YES" to most of these questions, you're definitely using punishment with your kids. Don't worry - you're not alone. The use of punishment is common.



Understanding Punishment

Punishment is a response to behavior that inflicts physical or emotional pain on a child. This can include yelling, name calling, hitting, sarcasm, ignoring, or isolating for a long period of time.



But it doesn't work!

- Because your (the parent's) behavior is the punishment, children may seek revenge or retaliation.
- Because children learn behavior from their parents, they will learn to punish others when they don't like something.
- Punishment can hurt the parent-child relationship. They may choose to avoid you.
- Punishment may stop the behavior in question, but it doesn't teach the child what to do instead.
- Children can become immune or desensitized to the punishment; parents find that they must increase the punishment for it to have the same effect.
- Punishment affects the way children think about themselves; it can harm a child's self-esteem and confidence.



So why use it?

Even though punishment doesn't work over time, parents do often find themselves using it. Why is this true?

- Punishment does seem to get an immediate change in behavior; however, over time, it can result in problems.
- Parents aren't sure what else to do in certain situations. We tend to respond quickly and emotionally - hitting, yelling and spanking are common when parents react without thinking.
- Parents fear losing authority. We fear that if we're not tough enough, our kids will run all over us.
- We haven't been taught any other way. We learned from the models set for us by our parents, just as our children are learning from us. There's nothing wrong with this, unless our parents used inappropriate punishment with us.



Teaching

A more effective alternative

The focus of these classes is to show you how to teach and discipline your children in a better way without having to resort to using inappropriate punishment.

Appropriate teaching works!

Appropriate Teaching tells kids what they did wrong and how to correct it. If you are pleasant, firm, consistent, and able to give clear messages, you will be teaching effectively.



Teaching is...

- **Specific** - you let your child know exactly what they did wrong.
- **Consistent** - you help your child understand the relationship between what they did and what will happen as a result of their actions.
- **Concrete** - you give your child clear examples of how to improve in the future.
- **Positive** - you help your child learn self-discipline and how to be in control of their actions and expressions of emotion.
- **Interactive** - you give your child a chance to show what they have learned. You are an active part of the learning process; you and your child work together toward a common goal.
- **Informative** - you become the teacher, giving information that helps your child learn to solve problems.
- **Healthy** - there is a greater potential for long-term benefits for your child, as well as your parent-child relationship.



Conclusion

Children are much more likely to learn when they are treated with affection and pleasantness than when they are treated with anger and physical punishment. Appropriate Teaching provides a positive framework for necessary learning to take place.

Remember that...

Children are constantly learning through demonstration, consequences, and descriptions. Parents are constantly teaching their children behavior in these same three ways.



Next Class

In class #2, we will learn to observe and accurately describe our children's behaviors. This is a critical first step toward learning how to appropriately teach our children.



Thank you!

We hope this class was useful to you.

For more free parenting resources, including additional classes in this series, please visit:

www.youthvillage.org

