

SUCCESSFUL PARENTING DISCIPLINE

by Paul J. Scoglio

This article is part of my Parent Coaching Program. The ideas presented are discussed in detail and are meant to be a reminder for parents to follow through on assignments.

INGREDIENTS

1. **Staying grounded** in your strength, body and soul (stay out of your head).
This will allow grace, essential strength and patience to rule the interaction, as opposed to a process of judging, frustration, escalating anger, or rage.
2. **Communicating clearly.** Check for understanding. (This is not about giving a rational argument.) Be clear about your intention, your desire and your expectation. Your understanding **must** include a willingness to accept none compliance as an option that will carry one or more consequences. (see below).
3. **Consistent follow through of parenting discipline plan.** There are no vacations from discipline. It will create a confused understanding about your expectations within the child.

NEW PARENTING ATTITUDES – TRY THEM

- **Children are never wrong.** Their behavior can be wrong, unacceptable, inappropriate, defiant or obnoxious. This change in attitude creates a new level of respect for the child and for the parent. This way **the parent is never wrong.** The parenting behavior or thinking can be less than adequate, unacceptable, inappropriate, obnoxious or mistaken, however that is not what you are hoping for. Behavioral change on the part of a parent or a child is usually easy. Changing from a bad person to a good person is difficult and involves an identity change. Changing someone's identity is generally impossible. **Behavioral change is relatively easy in comparison.**
- **Discipline is an expression of love** and protection for the highly valued child.
- **Compliance with discipline is a choice** the child will learn to make. All choices have consequences. The child deserves the freedom to choose. Parents must engineer their discipline so that the child will want to make the best choice.
- **Being “soft” or feeling guilty for taking disciplinary action is counter-productive** to managing family resources (parental energy). Parents can save enormous amounts of energy and time by expending a little more time on discipline planning and on acting out the plan.
- **Sometimes disciplinary action can wait.** It is unproductive to engage in disciplinary action whenever the parent is under the influence of adrenaline or alcohol. Anger and alcohol have their place and purpose and they do not fit into an effective disciplinary plan.

SPARE THE ROD AND SPOIL THE CHILD

This proverb is generally misunderstood. It does not mean you have an obligation to hit your child. It means that you have an obligation to extend your sense of order and to **guide** the child. The rod refers to the shepherd's staff. It is a long stick that is used to extend the length of the shepherd's arm. Shepherds don't hit their sheep with the rod or staff. They use the staff held by the extended arm to guide the flock in a particular direction. The rod or staff is a flexible boundary that can serve to “pen” the sheep

in on one side. **This means that parents are obligated to guide children in a particular direction.** Parents are not obliged to hit their children. It is unfortunate that some experts support and recommend the use of force rather than relying on the parents' power that rests in their personal authority. Use of force versus the use of power, can look very different in parenting situations.

Parental hitting becomes a model for hitting others and generates fear and resentment toward the parent. Hitting is divisive in the parent-child relationship. A child's fear of the parent creates a kind of emotional autonomy in the child that will leave the child to his/her own inadequate resources in a moment of emotional need later on. This is because the parent will become unapproachable to the child. In those crucial times of emotional need in the child, if the parent is not feared and is approachable then the child will benefit from the parent's wisdom. Hitting is part of a fear-based discipline strategy. Fear-based strategies generate shame and accomplish the same thing in a family that oppression, abuse, violence and war accomplish in society. Hitting is not based in love. Hitting is not a real solution. Hitting is a form of violence. It is a primitive act.

THE FAMILY BEHAVIORAL CHANGE FORMULA

1. **Create a list of rules and expectations** that both parents will agree to adhere to, to hold the child accountable. In a single parent family situation, the single parent must be clear about the rules being created.
2. **Create a list of penalties for misbehavior.** These are called **consequences.** The smaller the consequence the easier the compliance response. What is at stake here is **compliance.** Make it easy to comply so that a habit of compliance will form in the child. Make sure that the penalty is enforced as soon after the misbehavior as possible. For example, "You know that pushing your sister is against the rules. You have 10 minutes to wipe off the kitchen table."
3. **Create a list of privileges** that your child receives, as a result of being blessed to be your child. This list is your leverage. This list is used to gain compliance and provides a choice for non-compliance. For example, "You have 10 minutes to wipe off the kitchen table. You know that pushing your sister is against the rules, and if you do not do that chore within the 10 minutes, then you will not be allowed to go online this evening. I may even suspend your phone privileges this evening as well, if I hear anymore excuses."
4. **Give the child a choice** to take the consequence of the loss of privilege. This is the reason this formula will work. Choice eliminates struggle. People love to have a choice over being told what to do. Parents can set up the choice in such a way that it will be easy to predict what the child will choose. When the choice is a 3-minute chore versus 3-hours of lost privilege, the parent can predict what will be chosen.
5. **Announce, discuss and post the lists.** Revise them as the child grows. Maintain ongoing dialogue with the other parent about what works and what does not work. Be open to input from the child. If one or both parents are unable to be consistent then the formula fails. Often parents will be able to become consistent when engaged in Parent Coaching.

PITFALLS:

1. Only one parent in the household is willing to work on a disciplinary plan. Parents must function as a team. Some parents need help with communication between themselves before they can be successful in a coordinated parenting plan. Often the real problem is not with the child but instead with the parental communication. **Remedy:** Couples Communication Coaching.
2. Parents feel that keeping the peace is more important than taking consistent action. **Remedy:** Parent Coaching and Anger Management Coaching.

3. Parents engage in a struggle with a child and do not hold their authority. This often means that the parents get lost in judgments, their confusion or they lose their emotional balance and/or lose their temper. **Remedy:** Personal Coaching and Anger Management Coaching.

SOLUTIONS FOR COMPLICATED PARENTING SITUATIONS

PARENT COACHING. Parents are often the best coaches and counselors for their children. I work with parents to fine-tune their individual and collective efforts to create effective parenting interactions and enhance the parenting team, thereby enabling successful parenting discipline strategies. I work with parents, within a group context or individual context, around improving communication, team building, disciplinary strategies and in creating a parent/coach approach to the parent-child relationship.

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Version 10 - May 24, 2010