

VIP Value In Parenting

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Most of us react to children's misbehavior, but when we yell at or punish our children, everyone feels bad. Instead, we can learn to use discipline to teach and guide our children in a positive way. This way, everyone in the family feels good!

Getting Kids to Cooperate

By Aviva Schwab, M.Ed., Instructor, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)

Once upon a time

there were 3 new businesses. Each had one owner and one employee. The owner of the first business was TOO HARD. The owner of the second business was TOO SOFT. And the owner of the third business was FIRM but KIND (just right).

When the TOO HARD owner found out that her employee had left the copier on all weekend, she screamed, "YOU ARE SO IRRESPONSIBLE!" Then she punished: "No coffee breaks all week!"

When the TOO SOFT owner found out that his employee had left the copier on all weekend, he just muttered to himself, "I'd better not mention it because I want my employee to like me, but I really hope that this doesn't affect the electric bill too much."

When the FIRM but KIND owner found out that her employee had left the copier on all weekend, she said to him, "When I realized that the copier had been left on all weekend, I felt frustrated because it will increase our electric bill. If the copier is left on again, I will have to charge you for the extra cost."

After only two years, both the TOO HARD owner's business and the TOO SOFT owner's business went bankrupt. Why? Well, the TOO HARD owner was always looking for a new employee. Her employees kept quitting because they were afraid of her. Very little work got done.

The Perils of Punishment

(including Spanking)

- ◆ Children may become fearful of their parents. This may lead them to be afraid to confide in their parents about their problems.
- ◆ Children may learn that yelling and punishing are the way to solve problems with their friends.
- ◆ Older children may become bold enough to tune their parents out. Eventually, they may even rebel against the severe treatment.
- ◆ Children may continue to misbehave whenever they think they won't get caught.

Yelling and punishing are like crash diets - they only work in the short run and they sometimes come with dangerous side effects. I-Messages and consequences are like sensible diet plans. They work slowly and gradually and have lasting results.

The TOO SOFT owner's employee, on the other hand, never quit. She was not afraid of the owner at all. But she did not like him too much either - she thought of him as a pushover. Over time she became less and less helpful - she came into work late, she spent time joking about her boss, and she never, ever turned off the copier. Very little work got done.

What about the FIRM but KIND owner's business? First of all, her employee forgot to turn off the copier three more times. Each time, he had to pay for the extra electricity. After that he remembered to turn it off every time. In the meantime, the FIRM but KIND owner's business grew. And what about her first employee? Well, with the owner's guidance, training, and encouragement, after 18 years, he went on to start a new business of his own. -- *The End* -

Cooperation: Is it a Fairy Tale?

Yes, you guessed it. This story could be about families too. Some parenting methods are too soft, some are too hard, and others are firm but kind (just right). Like the FIRM but KIND owner and her employees, you and your children can live happily ever after. Having cooperative, loving, respectful children is not just a fairy tale. It can come true. Following are two skills that parents can use to help.

(Continued on other side)

Skill #1 I-Messages

When the TOO HARD owner found the copier on, she used a You-message: "YOU ARE SO IRRESPONSIBLE!" You-messages blame and criticize. You-messages often contain the word "you" and they are usually said in an angry tone of voice:

"You are such a slob!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"You're driving me crazy!"

"Cut that out!"

"You should know better."

"When will you learn that...?"

When children are spoken to in this way, they may feel put down and humiliated. They begin to lose respect for their parents.

So should parents just put up with misbehavior and say nothing, like the TOO SOFT owner did? Definitely not. Keep in mind that his employee did not respect him either. She thought of her boss as a "pushover."

How did the FIRM but KIND owner handle the copier problem? She did not blame or criticize. Instead of yelling, she talked about her own feelings with an I-Message:

"When I realized that the copier had been left on all weekend, I felt frustrated because it will increase our electric bill."

I-Messages treat people with respect. Children are much more open to listening and improving when they hear an I-Message because they feel valued. In turn, they begin to show the adult respect.

Talk about Yourself!

I-Messages don't lay blame because the person giving the I-Message talks about him/herself. Here's how to do it:

"When ... (tell what is happening)

I feel ... (tell what you feel)

because ... (tell the *reason* you feel that way)."

Example:

Brooke, 8, is throwing a ball in the living room.

"When the ball is thrown in the house

I feel concerned

because the lamp may break."

Notice that the I-Message used "I" instead of "you." However, sometimes it is not possible to leave out the "you." For example: "When I saw you walking towards the street, I was worried that you might get hurt."

The most important thing about an I-Message is

having a *caring tone of voice*. In fact, once in a while it may be enough just to say a few words like "the lamp might break" if you think that your child will get the message.

Okay, what if you give Brooke the I-Message in a kind tone of voice and she continues to throw the ball in the living room anyway? Should you say the I-Message again? Absolutely not. Repeating yourself just gives her negative attention and can lead to nagging and lecturing. It does not teach Brooke to respect you because it shows that your rules are soft instead of firm. Therefore, say the I-Message **only once**. If Brooke continues to misbehave by throwing the ball, use a consequence.

Skill #2 Consequences

"No coffee breaks all week!" That was how the TOO HARD owner punished her employee when the copier was left on. The punishment probably worked. The copier may never have been left on again. But at what cost? Employee after employee left because they resented being treated so harshly.

Likewise, if Brooke receives a punishment for throwing the ball in the house ("No TV for the rest of the day!") she may stop doing it. But at what cost? Brooke may feel angry or resentful about being treated so disrespectfully. She may even throw the ball in the living room when you are not around, or she might misbehave in other ways to get back at you.

Consequences: More effective in the long run

The FIRM but KIND owner told her employee about a consequence: "If the copier is left on again, I will have to charge you for the extra cost." Did it work? Yes, but not as fast as the punishment ("No coffee breaks...!") did. The employee experienced the consequence of paying for the additional electricity three times before he finally stopped leaving the copier on. **But it was worth the wait**. Not only was the problem solved in a fair and respectful way, but he continued to be a happy, dedicated and hard-working employee.

How to give a consequence

Back to Brooke and the ball: Consequences are different from punishment in two ways. Consequences are **extremely mild** and they are **logically related** to the misbehavior. So saying "No TV for the rest of the day!" is both too harsh and it has nothing to do with throwing the ball in the house. (Brooke may think, "No TV? That's not fair! My Dad's so mean -I'll show him!") A consequence would be: "If the ball is thrown in the living room again, I will have to put it away for 8 minutes" (the number of minutes equal to Brooke's age). As was the case with the I-Message, the consequence is

mentioned in a caring voice and only once. If Brooke continues to throw the ball, follow through immediately by removing the ball and saying, "I see you decided not to use the ball. You can have it back in 8 minutes." (Brooke may grumble to herself, "I'm not happy about this but I guess I deserved it. I hate to lose the ball--oh well, I'd better be more careful from now on.")

If, when Brooke gets the ball back after 8 minutes she throws it again, you extend the consequence. Say something like, "I see it's still hard to remember not to throw the ball in the house. I'll have to hold onto it for 12 minutes (half again as long) this time." And so on.

Cooperation: The Happy Ending

A note of caution: At first Brooke's behavior may get worse or she may say, "I don't care! Big deal!" when you follow through with a consequence. What she is doing is testing you to see if your new method is firm or soft. **Do not give up.** If Brooke hears a gentle I-Message followed by a fair and mild consequence

each time that she misbehaves, she will begin to realize that you are firm and that you always mean what you say. Eventually, she will begin to cooperate as soon as she hears an I-Message. Only rarely will you need to follow through with a consequence! That is a sign that your efforts have helped her develop self-control and self-discipline – a very happy ending indeed.

Resources: *A Parent's Guide to Understanding and Motivating Children* by Amy Lew and Betty Lou Bettner, *The Parent's Handbook* by Don Dinkmeyer, Sr., Gary D. McKay, and Don Dinkmeyer, Jr., and *Setting Limits in the Classroom* by Robert J. MacKenzie.

For information about workshops on this topic:

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP):
845-343-7845

Cornell Cooperative Extension: 845-344-1234

Maternal Infant Services Network: 845-928-7448

The Seven Principles of Discipline

Why not try one new principle each week?

Children depend on wise, experienced adults to set limits that will keep them safe until they learn to regulate their own behavior. By helping your children follow your family guidelines, and modeling respectful and cooperative behavior in the home, you are teaching your children important life lessons. From these lessons learned at home, children are more likely to become cooperative members of their families, classrooms and communities.

Principle Number One

- ◆ Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't do.

Example: Say "Let's see what you can build with blocks" instead of "Don't throw the blocks!"

Principle Number Two

- ◆ Protect and preserve children's feelings that they are loveable and capable.

Example: When Peter spills the milk he was carrying to the table, you say "That's a hard job. We'll wipe it up and you can try again," instead of "can't you ever do anything right?"

Principle Number Three

- ◆ Offer children choices only when you are willing to abide by their decisions.

Example: It's shopping day, and your groceries are in short supply. The question, "what would you like for breakfast today?" is likely to lead to trouble. Instead, say "would you like toast and cheese or oatmeal for breakfast?"

Discipline and punishment are NOT the same thing

PUNISHMENT only tells the child what they shouldn't be doing.

DISCIPLINE helps a child learn what the correct behavior is and how to achieve it.

Principle Number Four

- ◆ Change the environment instead of the child's behavior.

Example: Your children want snacks as soon as they come home from school. Have a healthy snack waiting for them and they might be less tempted to go for the cookie, chips and soda.

Principle Number Five

- ◆ Work with children instead of against them.

Example: Dana wants you to take her to the mall; you want her to clean her room. You say, "I'll be glad to take you to the mall as soon as you clean your room."

Principle Number Six

- ◆ Give children safe limits they can understand. Maintain your authority calmly and consistently.

Example: Maria has borrowed the carving knife to try soap carving. You say, "Maria, we have a rule that you may not play with knives. Let's find a safe tool you can use for that project."

Principle Number Seven

- ◆ Set a good example. Speak and act only in ways you want children to speak and act.

The importance of parents as models for children cannot be overstated.

Resource: Discipline is Not a Dirty Word, Jennifer Birkmayer.

PARENTS: See if your kids can help you find the I-Messages and Consequences in the examples below. Ask them how they feel about different ways that they are disciplined!

Luis, 9, did not do one of his chores

I-Message or You-Message?

- A** "How many times do I have to tell you to clear the table?"
- B** "When the table isn't cleared, I feel stressed-out because I have a lot to do after dinner."

Consequence or Punishment?

- A** "If I have to clear the table after dinner, I won't have time to pack your lunch tonight so you will need to do it."
- B** "If you don't clear the table, you can forget about the movie this weekend."

Josh, 5, is playing too close to the street

I-Message or You-Message?

- A** "When you go near the street, I worry that you might get hurt."
- B** "When will you learn to stay away from the street?"

Consequence or Punishment?

- A** "If I see you near the street again, you will need to go into the house for 5 minutes where I know you are safe."
- B** "If I see you near the street again, you will get a good spanking."

Tia, 11, likes to miss the school bus so that her mother has to drive her

I-Message or You-Message?

- A** "When you miss the bus, I feel annoyed because I have to make an extra trip to school."
- B** "Hurry up-You're going to be late again!"

Consequence or Punishment?

- A** "If I have to drive you to school this morning, you will lose your phone privileges for the week."
- B** "If I have to drive you to school this morning, I will take \$1.00 out of your allowance for the gasoline and my time."

ANSWERS - LUIS: I-Message: B, Consequence: A, JOSH: I-Message: A, Consequence: B, TIA: I-Message: A, Consequence: B.



845-294-8308

PARTNERS FOR CHILDREN ACTION TEAMS:

- Prenatal Care Team** Ann Craig 568-5280
- Eating Disorders Coalition** Debbie de Jong 294-7411
- Child Care Team** Liz Kuriplach 294-4012
- Parenting Team** Denyse Variano 344-1234
- Immunization Team** Shirley VanZetta 291-2375
- Child Sexual Abuse Team** Lynda Garner 291-2611
- School Readiness Team** Emma Klimek 291-0120
- Community Alliance for Prevention of Substance Abuse**
Danette Shepard 294-9000
- Positive Youth Development Team**
Carol Chichester 291-2399
- Children's Mental Health Team** Lynda Garner 291-2611
- Health Issues Team*** *Developmental Stages
- Healthy Orange: 845-294-8308**

Vacations are over, the children are back at school and everyone has returned to a daily hectic schedule. What better time to step back and make sure we are all taking advantage of the many local programs available to assist us in dealing with problems we come up against in our day to day activities.

The Partners For Children was set up to give parents a place to turn to for help in solving problems. **Healthy Orange**, the "umbrella" over Partners For Children, will assist the Partners obtain their goal by making sure that families have access to the resources they need. This partnership is working to insure that Orange County's children will be born healthy, remain healthy, and succeed in school and life.

Please review and save this list of Action Teams. They have resources or programs that are available to you and your family through **Healthy Orange**. Do not hesitate to call any one of them for help and/or direction with a problem you are faced with; if they can't help you they can refer you to the person who can.

- Sue Stenson, Executive Director, *Healthy Orange*

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For more information on parenting education and/or the Orange County Parenting Coalition Action Team, contact Cornell Cooperative Extension at 845 - 344 - 1234.
www.cce.cornell.edu/orange



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