DISCIPLINE
By Metaleen Morgan Thomas

Originally this paper was a series of articles written for a childcare center, hence many of the examples are for children two to five years of age. With very little adaptation the same methods can be used with older children.

It is our job as parents, childcare givers, guardians, or professionals to teach children to behave properly. There are many methods or approaches that can be used. One method may not work in all situations or on all children. Some methods will work when the child is four but not at seven. We adults must learn many methods so we can choose the best method for that point in time. We want children to want to change their action rather than to change it in fear of what may happen if they don’t. There are better ways to discipline a child than to threaten or give punishment. Force may stop the behavior temporarily but it creates other unwanted problems as guilt, shame, and fear. Children should be disciplined in such a way as to instill security, confidence, self-control, self-knowledge and an understanding of what society expects of them.

There are two aspects of discipline. First, there are many things we can do to prevent problems from developing. And secondly, we must sometimes correct already existing problems (heaven only knows where children get these behaviors!!!) The last section of this paper discusses the pros and cons of spanking.

I. Preventing Problems From Developing

GOOD RELATIONSHIPS: When children know that we really care for them and respect their uniqueness, they will strive to please us. When they see our affection and feel our support, they will more easily accept our guidance and example.

ATTENTION: Children need a lot of attention during the insecure developing years. There are two critical times. The first crucial period is from birth to around age three. The child needs a lot of hugs, kisses, and pats on the back. Sometimes they need continuous holding. From three on they still need this physical and emotional attention but to a lesser degree. Since children have so little control over this BIG world around them, the more secure we make them feel, the less they will crave attention as adults, and the more cooperative they will be as children. The second critical time period is early adolescence, from ages 10-15. This is puberty. The hormones are going crazy, their feelings are constantly changing, and they feel they are on stage with the whole world watching. They are standing on one leg and are easily knocked off balance.

PRAISE: Many discipline problems can be eliminated by praising good behaviors and ignoring bad ones. Praise means thanking children for doing something right or it could be a touch, a smile, or paying attention to the good behavior. It may be talking to someone else when the child can overhear, as "did you see how well Susie put up her toys?" For praise to be more effective, it needs to be specific (tell the child exactly what behavior was good), immediate and sincere. We should catch the child doing something well and praise, praise, praise! PRAISE ALWAYS WORKS!!! If it didn’t work, the praise used didn’t sink in. Change the type of praise until you find the one that works. Children want to please and our praise tells them that they have pleased us.

MODELING: Children imitate adults. Correct behavior by adults usually promotes correct behavior in children. For instance, you should not stand on furniture to hang a picture if you teach that standing on furniture is wrong. Adults should not interrupt others if you teach that interrupting someone is wrong. We should model the behavior we want our children to learn.

EXPLANATIONS: Children, like adults, don’t want to be caught off guard. They need to know what’s going to happen ahead of time. Explain everything! If you tell children that they are going to the park and forget to mention the three stops on the way, you’re in trouble. Before going to the doctor, explain what may happen and be honest. Never say that it won’t hurt when it will. Tell them ahead that it’s almost bath time and they’ll go more easily.

ROUTINE: Children get comfortable with routine and will fuss when it is not consistent. If there is going to be a change, let them know ahead of time. It helps to eat at the same place and take baths at the same time. Constant change frustrates a child.
Expectations & Facts About The Elderly
(ages & stages)

Myths: elderly people:
• Are chronically ill
• Have memory loss
• Can’t drive
• Have lost their ability to have sex
• Struggle with loneliness & depression
• Have difficulty paying their bills
• Will have bladder-control issues
• Will have gray hair
• Will have grandchildren
• Will frequently forget important names
• Will not be able to live independently

• About 20% say they have a serious illness, are not sexually active, often feel sad or depressed (80% are good)
• About 17% say they have trouble paying bills (83% are okay)
• 14% say they have trouble driving (86% are driving well)
• Lower income people are having more trouble in their elder years than higher income people (but no difference in sexual activity)

Problems tend to increase as one grows into their 80s:
• 41% of those 85+ admit having trouble some memory loss
• 30% of those 85+ are experiencing some sadness or depression
• 25% 85+ say they never drive
• only 1% of those 85+ say their lives are worse than expected

Research of how younger adults think they will spend their elder years:
• Enjoying more time with their family
• Traveling more for pleasure
• On their hobbies
• Doing volunteer work
• Developing a 2nd career

What are the facts?
• 60% of adults 65 and over, say they feel younger than their age. The gap in years between actual age and “felt age” widens as people grow older.
• older adults also have a count-my-blessings attitude
• Near 50% say their life has turned out better than they expected (45% say it’s turned out as they expected it)
• About ¼ say they have experienced some hearing loss

• 70% of those 65+ say they are enjoying more time with family
• 66% of those 65+ say they have more time with their hobbies, having financial security, and enjoy not working
• 60% say they get more respect and feel less stress
• Over 50% like having time for travel and volunteer work
• Most are experiencing their “golden years”
• Source: They are living longer than & love it

1 Source: Pew Research Center Social & Demographic Trends, 2009
Just for Today....for parents

1. Just for today I will love my children without condition. I will recognize that the best way to help my children grow and change is to love them as they are. I will remember that my job as a parent is to find their strengths, not their weaknesses.

2. Just for today I will accept myself. I will forgive myself for mistakes I have made as a parent. I will recognize the priceless gift of love that only I can give my children.

3. Just for today I will accept the circumstances of my family. I will understand that there is a reason for any pain or conflict we may experience. I will believe that its purpose is not to defeat our family but to help us become stronger and more loving.

4. Just for today I will choose how to react. I will not be a puppet on the children's strings. I will recognize anger, resentment, worry, or hurt as something of my own making.

5. Just for today I will not regret the past. If I look back, it will be to learn from my errors in order that I may act with greater understanding.

6. Just for today I will not worry about the future. I will not project the rest of my children's lives onto the events of today. I will not torment myself over things I cannot control. I will take action where appropriate. All else I will put in the hands of my Higher Power.

7. Just for today I will live in the present. While I will make amends for the past and plan for the future, I will embrace the day as if it might be my last. I will cherish this opportunity to be with and learn from my family.

8. Just for today I will be responsible. I will honor my commitments and keep my promises. I will do everything possible to see that my children's physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met.

9. Just for today I will deal with conflict. I will recognize that conflict is natural and healthy, I will not try to win arguments. I will try to solve problems.

10. Just for today I will be honest with myself and my family. I will take responsibility for accepting and dealing with my emotions. I will communicate my feelings and needs to my family, and encourage them to do the same.

11. Just for today I will not try to control the lives of my children. I will not presume to direct their interests, feelings, and relationships. I will provide my children with the love, values, and limits they need to feel secure and to fulfill their destiny as unique human beings.

12. Just for today I will ask for help. If I am in any way harming or abusing my children, I will ask others to help me and to help my children. I will recognize this as a moral imperative.

13. Just for today I will be grateful. I will reflect upon the wondrous miracle of my children. I will count my blessings.

14. Just for today I will model the kindness, understanding, and respect I would like to receive from my children. I will remember that what I do has far greater impact on my children than what I say.

15. Just for today I will maintain my serenity. I will be calm in the face of family chaos, optimistic in the face of family conflict.

16. Just for today I will consider my children my equals. I will respect their unique identity and worth as people. I will grant them the right to mature at their own pace and in their own way. I will not try to own or manipulate them. I will recognize that age and experience mean nothing in the eyes of my Higher Power.

17. Just for today I will not try to solve all the problems of my children. I will offer love, support, and counsel. I will not deprive my children the opportunity to make their own decisions and solve their own problems. I will give my children the gift of my faith in their abilities.

18. Just for today I will learn something from my children. I will recognize that my children are my greatest teachers. If I listen carefully, they will tell me what I need to know.

Adapted from Parenting One Day at a Time, pp.34-35, by Alex J. Paddock. Published by Hazelden, 1996.
Letting Kids Be Kids

When you think to yourself “Why Me?” or when you get unbelievably frustrated that your five-year-old can’t tie his own shoe or another glass of milk got spilled, bear in mind that what your kids are doing is being kids and that your losing control is not being responsible to them. It is serving your own need. You can make them feel bad that they’re not smart enough for you or careful enough for you, but that won’t make them smarter or more careful. It will just make them feel bad about themselves and sorry they disappointed you. Their job is not to keep you free from disappointment or frustration. Their job is to be kids. And if they please you or make you proud along the way, that is a fringe benefit. But it is not their job.

(Wolitz, pp. 40-41)
Parenting Resources
(Beyond Our 12-Step Recovery Sources)

Ages/Stages Books:
Dr. Louise Bates Ames
- Your One Year Old
- Your Two Year Old
- Your Three Year Old
- Etc.
What to Expect... books

Cooperative Parenting
www.cooperativeparenting.com/

211
- Dial 211
- Cell phone: 1-888-982-1162
  (1-888-UW211NC)
- www.nc211.org

Ages & Stages (online)
Just-In-Time newsletters
- www.extension.org/pages/Just_In_Time_Parenting_eNewsletters

Area e-newsletter
(Hickory Western Piedmont) - Macaroni Kid (macaronikid.com/subscribe)

Supernanny (ABC)

Nanny 911 (Fox)

Parent’s Journal
- On many NPR stations each week
- www.parentsjournal.com
- Download programs from website

Central Foothills Mommies
- A mom social group:
  www.CentralFoothillsMomies.com

Nat’l Parenting Educational Network
- www.npen.org/
  - an umbrella organization on parenting issues
  - has NC contacts

12-Step Parenting Books
- Alex J. Packer, Parenting One Day at a Time, Hazelden
- Janet G. Woititz, Healthy Parenting, Simon & Schuster
- Barbara Joy, Easy Does It, Mom, Conari Press

Etc.....

From Metaleen Morgan Thomas
Twelve Steps As Applied To Parenting

1. We admitted we were powerless (codependent) over our children -- that our lives had become unmanageable by trying to control them.
2. Came to believe that a new parenting style could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to try these new parenting methods.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our former parenting techniques.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all the children we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to our children wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory of ourselves and our old habits, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our parenting techniques, praying only for the well-being of our children and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to share these methods, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Adapted by Metaleen
Discipline Summary

In summary, there are two aspects to discipline: preventing problems and handling existing problems. Different techniques will probably be used with different children for different situations and even when the same child is at a different age. The whole purpose of discipline is to get children to behave correctly while at the same time learn self-control and self-understanding. Discipline should install security and confidence. The better discipline methods are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Preventing Problems By:</th>
<th>Handling Existing Problems By:</th>
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<td>Giving child a lot of attention</td>
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<td>Applying for living experiences</td>
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<td>Serving good food</td>
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12-Steps of Parenting

1. I admitted I was powerless over parenting— that my home life had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that knowledge greater than I currently had, could give me some sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn my will and my child’s life over to new parenting styles that go along with CoDA principles.
4. Made a searching and moral inventory of my former parenting methods.
5. Admitted to God, to myself, and to another parent, the exact nature of my wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God help me remove my parenting defects.
7. Humbly asked God to help me change my parenting shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all the children I had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such children whenever possible, with no exceptions.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when I was wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of new parenting methods, and the power to carry them out.
12. Having had a rude awakening as the result of learning new parenting styles, I shall try to carry this message to other parents and to practice these principles in all my affairs.

Serenity Prayer for Parents

God, grant me the serenity to accept my children’s age-appropriate behaviors...

The courage to provide healthy boundaries and logical consequences...

And the wisdom to know when to let go.

By Katherine F (Tidewater Area Recovery Community)

Summary

My job as a parent is to provide my children with an anxious-free, child-centered environment, where they can be spontaneous, fun-loving, and safe.
Spanking/Punishment

Results in the child feeling:
- Insecure
- Guilty
- Afraid
- Confused
- Hurt
- Defiant
- Irresponsible
- Having a lack of self-control
- Having a poor self-concept

Spanking teaches that conflicts and differences are solved by hitting rather than talking to solve the problem.

Said another way:
- Spanking teaches the child to be afraid of the adult, not to respect him or her
- Spanking confuses the child. The parent (teacher) is now seen as a source of danger or pain.
- Spanking can make a child feel worthless and can damage self-esteem
- Spanking is often the easy way out. It happens when we have just ‘had it’ and we REACT. Good discipline helps us choose the consequence of the misbehavior after we’ve had a short time to think about it.
- Spanking fills the child with anger, just as we feel as adults if we are hit. We’d want to strike back. If the child can’t strike back, he/she may later in dangerous or controlling ways.
- It’s hard to stop once we get in the habit of spanking or hitting. It may lead to a whelp here or a bruise there. It may lead to abuse. Eighty percent (80%) of all prisoners in America’s jails were abused as children. Eighty-five percent (85%) of children who were abused become abusing parents.
- Even light spankings show the child that only the adult controls his (the child’s) misbehavior. We want the child to help control his/her own behavior.
- Giving the child a say-so in correcting his behavior really helps. He may become a creative problem-solver.
- Spanking or hitting may help for a short while, but hitting really has nothing to do with the misbehavior. The child may behave while you’re watching, but misbehave when you’re out of sight.

From a parenting workshop in Catawba County, NC
The Parent's Promises

If we apply the tools of recovery to the tasks of child raising, we will be amazed at the results. We will know a new freedom from worry, guilt, and conflicts. We will know a new happiness as we witness the growth of our children into moral, caring beings. We will cease to dwell on the past. We will understand the true meaning of trust and love. No matter how much we have hurt our children, we will see that we can help them to heal. We will comprehend, and know how to apply the curative powers of love, honesty, forgiveness, and faith. That feeling of isolation and inadequacy will disappear. We will lose our self-focus and learn to appreciate the needs and feelings of our children. Our whole approach to child raising will change. Fear of intimacy will leave us. We will solve problems we used to avoid. We will model respect and acceptance, and discover that our children will respond in kind. We will suddenly realize that we are doing for our families what we could never do for ourselves.

From Parenting One Day at a Time, p. 11. © 1966 by Alex J. Packer, Ph.D. Published by Hazelden. Adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous, pp. 83-84.