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Six Ideas To Help You Discipline Your Kid

By Brent Shields

Got a kid? Love him or her? Of course you do. So when he or she misbehaves on a consistent basis, what's the best way to administer discipline?

Well, as you may be aware, there is a wide range of thought on this subject. One school of thought teaches essentially hand's off, and says, the little darlings are very intelligent, so let them figure it all out on their own. No punishment or reward systems. Still another extreme says that the Singapore model of "caning" people for littering is a good one.

Most of us find ourselves in between these two nutty positions...and the word "nutty" is being charitable. If you don't think so, then stop reading. You're a lost cause and should find yourself a nice rubber room somewhere so that you don't hurt yourself or anyone else.

The fact is that anyone who actually watches children behave – without preset mental filters – will almost certainly come to the conclusion that different children respond differently. Some kids have a very high "pain" threshold. They can take whatever penalties you exact as they stubbornly refuse to do what they should do. There are others who can be easily motivated by various token systems.

So how do you find out what method of discipline will work for your kid(s)?

In a word: experiment! Here are six ideas for proceeding.

#1 – Put on your "scientist hat." Research what's out there. No author knows your kid better than you do. But many researchers have seen thousands of kids and had opportunities to try various strategies with kids and their families. So knowing what's been done before is a very good strategy in and of itself.

#2 – Once you have a sense of what is possible, start interacting with your own kid(s). Bear in mind that we live in societies that are increasingly filled with busybodies who do everything they can to blur the lines between discipline and abuse. So be careful as you try different discipline ideas.

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Important note: as you try these ideas, it is critically important that you (a) remember your main goal: raising good, intelligent children. If this isn't your main goal, please find that aforementioned rubber room for yourself. And (b) be patient. This is as much an experiment for them as it is for you. They've never been where they are right now. It's their first time being a kid at the age they are. And remember, you're not dealing with lab rats here. You're dealing with *your* children. Never lose sight of that.

#3 – When you find something that seems to work, don't think you can finally relax. Nothing of the sort, my friend. Don't confuse short term hits to the bull's-eye with long term success. Your child may be responding to novelty as much as to the discipline. When the novelty wears off – and it will – your child may very well revert to the old behaviors that you tried to change. Novelty has a tough time lasting more than a few weeks. So give things at least 3–6 weeks to see if the changes are enduring.

#4 – Tweak before you make major changes in your efforts. For example, suppose you are rewarding your kid(s) with pizza at the end of the week if certain things are done right. And suppose you have

reason to believe they are responding to novelty rather than the measures themselves. Rather than junking the measures, tweak them a bit to determine if your suspicion is valid. For example, you might vary the food rewards and say, "Look – if you do the right things, you get to pick what we have for Friday dinner." You might be on the right track and tweaking gives you a chance to really find out.

#5 – If tweaking doesn't work, then by all means try new approaches, keeping in mind all of the above.

#6 – Finally, be humble enough to know that you might need professional family help in the form of therapists and other counselor types. You've got to be careful here because these professionals vary widely in terms of competence and also in terms of appropriateness for your family. For example, some therapists suggest Ritalin as the first line of therapeutic intervention if the child is having trouble in school. You have a right to be skeptical in such situations. Listen to your own inner voice here. No matter how well intentioned, many therapists simply get things wrong. If the one you've initially selected isn't right for your child or your family, try another.

Note: there are professional organizations that can help you find a decent therapist if there is a need. America and many other nations are rich in resources to help families. Look to them if your problems grow too intense for you to handle on your own.

Finally, use common sense. Sounds strange perhaps, but the fact is that no matter what professional help you may seek out, no matter what books you read, and no matter what online forums you participate in – YOU will be making the decisions. You are responsible, like it or not. Use the best intelligence you can and proceed with caution.

About the author, Brent is a regular writer for

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ARE YOU DISCIPLINED?

By Rhoberta Shaler

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For most people, the word "discipline" has an immediate negative connotation. It implies something imposed from the outside, doesn't it? It means that someone or something is controlling or demanding, neither of which are particularly appealing. When we do think about self-discipline, it, too, often has a negative spin because it is seen as difficult and contributing to failure. Can you think about it differently?

Self-discipline is nothing more than keeping your commitments to yourself. If you say something is important and significant to you, then take this little test:

Does that something that you SAY is important show up a significant number of times in either your calendar, or your checkbook, or both? If it does not, then, where is the demonstration that it is important to you? Do you regularly do what you say has value to you?

I'm sure you understand the picture. I believe behavior, not words. How about you?

So, self-discipline arises from self-esteem and self-esteem is enhanced by self-discipline. Then, it seems natural that you take a look at your self-esteem. Do you believe that you are worth spending the time and/or money on? Do you get the "left-overs" of time and resources rather than filling your own cup? It is not unusual to feel that you are being a "good" person when you are self-sacrificing. That's because our society often tells us this is so. Oh, good thinking! The society says so because everyone else benefits from your self-sacrifice. In fact, "sacrifice" itself is an interesting concept. The dictionary says it means "the act of giving up or destroying one thing for the sake of something else".

Do you really want to be SELF-sacrificing?

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