

Let the punishment fit the crime

Vicky's supposed to come home after school, but she goes to a friend's house instead.

Todd gives Mom back talk about finishing his homework.

Natalie leaves a mess in the bedroom ... bathroom ... family room ... and kitchen.

What do you do when your children misbehave? Do you hold them accountable for their actions ... look the other way ... hand out punishments? Your response can have a profound effect on your children's attitudes and future behavior.

When you punish a child, you inflict some kind of penalty on them. You either take something away or force something unpleasant onto them. Some of us have automatic punishments we rely on: no television, grounding, no treats, extra chores, verbal attacks, or spankings.

Punishments require parents to dominate over children and impose their will onto them. The problem with punishment is the incredible backwash of hostility it creates. Think back to a time in your childhood when you were punished. What kind of specific thoughts did you feel as you were being punished? By taking a realistic look at the effects of punishment, you can decide whether another approach may be more helpful. Here are five typical reactions kids have to being punished:

1. Hostility toward parents: "They're mean for doing this awful thing to me."

2. A lack of remorse: "I did the crime. I took the punishment. Now, I'm free to misbehave again."

3. A desire for revenge: "I'll get back at them for this."

4. A challenge: "Next time, I won't get caught."

5. Hostility toward themselves: "I'm a bad person."

Punishment makes it easier for kids to overlook their misbehavior. It's a distraction, taking the children's focus away from self-evaluation and onto the punishment. The more we fuss and fret over bad behavior, the worse the behavior gets. Kids become more determined than ever to defeat their oppressive parents.

If punishment isn't the answer to misbehavior, then what is? Children need to be held accountable for their actions. They need discipline and corrective feedback. They need an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, and return disorder to order.

How can that happen without pitting you against your child? The goal of discipline without punishment, is to respond in a way that allows the following reactions in our children after misbehavior:

■ Healthy feelings of remorse: "I feel bad about doing that."

■ Personal responsibility: "My actions, not my character, caused the problem."

■ Look for the lesson: "How would I act differently next time?"

■ Search for solutions: "What can I do now to redeem myself?"

Children need to see, without distraction, that they are the cause of what happens in their lives. By using parenting methods that create self-reflection and a forward focus, we help our children develop attitudes and behaviors which grow responsibility. It's easier for a child to give parents respect and dignity, when they know how it feels to receive respect and dignity. Here is a list of specific steps we can take to create a loving and learning atmosphere for our kids:

Express your feelings without verbally attacking the child:

Kids will hear more and resist less when you attack the problem instead of the child. "I'm upset. The kitchen was clean when I left, and now it's a mess!"

Focus Forward: Your child cannot go back in time to undo

the mistake. Focus on what needs to be done from this point forward. The dishes need to be put in the dishwasher, and the soda bottles need to be put in the garage.

Express your expectations: To avoid a power struggle, resist a direct order. Instead, tell them what you expect. "When bath time is over, I expect the wet towel to be hung over the tub."

Offer a choice: Choices give kids ownership in their actions. When kids make the choice, they are more sincere in their efforts. "Even though you didn't like the gift grandma gave you, you still need to thank her. Would you like to call her on the telephone or write her a thank you note?"

Give yourself time to cool off: A child's misbehavior can drive a parent nuts. If you feel overwhelmed with shock, frustration, or rage, tell your child, "I need time to think about this."

By following through after you're calm, you'll make better choices which lead to better results.

Teach your child how to make amends: Children want to feel good about themselves. Help them regain good feelings by giving them opportunities to set things right. "It took Dad a whole hour to find the hammer you misplaced. Spending some time cleaning up dad's tool room might help him feel better about it."

Ask self-evaluative questions: By asking questions that make children look inside themselves, they gain thinking strategies for the future.

They don't even have to answer the question. Thinking about it is enough. "What choices did you make to get this result?" "What other choices could you make next time?" "What can you do now, to make things better?"

Yell sparingly: The more you yell, the less effective your yelling becomes. If you lose control, you lose your point.

Let children experience the consequences of their actions: When we save them from this discomfort, they lose a power-

ful learning opportunity. If they break a friend's toy, let them deal with their friend's displeasure. If they stay up too late, let them cope with being tired at school. Of course, their personal safety comes first. You wouldn't let them play in traffic to learn what could happen first hand.

What's the difference between a punishment and a consequence? When you punish, you do something TO a child. A consequence is the direct result of your child's actions. Both are unpleasant. However, consequences let kids see themselves as the cause of their discomfort. They made it happen, and they can make it stop by making different choices.

Here's an example: Antonio refuses to put his dirty clothes in the hamper. If mom punishes him, she might yell, criticize, and tell him he's grounded. If she disciplines without punishment, she might start by stating her expectations: "I expect your dirty clothes to be placed in the hamper." If that doesn't work, she could give a choice: "Would you like to put your dirty clothes in the hamper or would you prefer to take them down to the laundry room?"

If he still doesn't cooperate, mom lets him experience the results of his misbehavior. She doesn't wash his clothes. She doesn't berate him, or complain. She lets him see for himself what his actions produce.

Disciplining without punishment creates a climate of respect.

A climate in which both the parents needs and the child's needs are taken into consideration.

By giving guidance and accountability, kids gain a set of experiences that will help them develop responsible behavior.

Marilyn Suttie helps corporate and educational groups increase parenting skills, self-esteem and work/life balance strategies with interactive presentations and workshops. E-mail her at MSuttie@aol.com or visit her web site: www.SuttieOnline.NET

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Andrews

Athena and John Andrews of Farmington Hills celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on Feb. 1st over dinner with their sons, Nick, George and family friend Frank Dutto.



Kronk-Schokora

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kronk of Farmington announce the engagement of their daughter, Julie Ann, to Jeremy John Schokora, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Schokora of Clinton Township.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of Mercy High School and the University of Michigan with a bachelor of science in nursing and a masters of health care administration. She is employed as a health care strategy and operations consultant with Deloitte Consulting.

Her fiancé is also a graduate of the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in economics and Spanish. He is employed as vice president at General Reinsurance and is currently working on his M.B.A. at Loyola University in Chicago.

An April wedding is planned at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington.



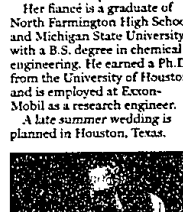
Teeter-McMinn

Charles Paul and Pam Fitch of Deer Park, Texas, announce the engagement of their daughter, Dianna Carol Teeter, to Timothy Edward McMinn, son of Wallin and Ann McMinn of Farmington Hills.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of the University of Houston with a BS in accounting. She is currently employed as a marketing services representative for Williams Gas Pipeline - Transco.

Her fiancé is a graduate of North Farmington High School and Michigan State University with a B.S. degree in chemical engineering. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Houston and is employed at Econ-Mobil as a research engineer.

A late summer wedding is planned in Houston, Texas.



Heikkinen-Gabriel

Alana Heikkinen and Bill Gabriel will be married in August at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Troy. The bride-to-be is the daughter of Roger Heikkinen of White Lake and Judy Heikkinen of Farmington Hills.

She is a graduate of Albion College with a bachelor of arts in business management-economics and Spanish. She is currently employed with Allegiance as an account consultant. Her fiancé is the son of Jerry and Katie Gabriel of Bloomfield Hills. He is also a graduate of Albion College with a bachelor of arts in business management-economics. He is currently employed with Concord Financial as a mortgage consultant.

THE Observer & Eccentric

Congratulates the Feature Teachers for February

Each teacher will receive a dozen roses and 4 movie passes courtesy of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Wesley Berry Florist and Star Theatres.

Vicki Shaw

Congratulations to Vicki Shaw, a third grade teacher at Gill Elementary School in the Farmington Public Schools. Vicki Shaw is an Observer & Eccentric Teacher of the Month for February.

She was nominated for the award by Stephanie Kessler, a fellow teacher, and by Bethany Petersen, her former student at Gill.

"Vicki Shaw is one of the finest teachers I have ever worked with. I am speaking from experience," wrote Kessler, a teacher at Gill.

"Vicki throws her whole heart and soul into teaching. She makes her classroom safe. The staff respects her knowing that whenever she expresses her opinion, she ALWAYS speaks with the best interest of the student at heart."

Bethany's letter outlined how she was diagnosed with diabetes while in Shaw's class last year. "While I was in the hospital and one of the doctors was talking to my parents, the phone rang. It was my teacher, Mrs. Shaw, calling to see how I was. She explained that she too was a diabetic and that we could eat our snack together."

"When I went back to school I still had days I didn't feel very well. She was always there with a hug and a kind and understanding word. She even bought sugarfree candy for me so when the other kids got a piece of candy I would have some also."

"She makes everyone feel special," wrote Bethany.

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers thinks she's special too, and we're proud to name Vicki Shaw as one of our featured teachers for February.

Faith Clay

Congratulations to Faith Clay, a fourth grade teacher at Bemis Elementary School in the Troy School District. Faith Clay is an Observer & Eccentric Teacher of the Month for February.

She was nominated for the award by fellow teacher Ann Hagerty and Bemis Principal Janet Keeling.

"Faith Clay's fourth grade classroom facilitates student achievement. She is always prepared for the ultimate learning experience. Her students thrive in her warm and nurturing classroom, always expecting to be challenged and rewarded for their best effort."

"She shows her students respect and, in turn, is respected. She plans how every minute of her teaching day can maximize her students' learning," wrote Ann Hagerty.

Principal Janet L. Keeling added: "No child is allowed to 'fall' in Faith's classroom... whatever the problem, whatever the need, Faith will do whatever it takes to overcome obstacles and help each child experience success in school."

"She has a gift for making learning relevant, meaningful & fun!" added Keeling.

Faith Clay, a 24-year resident of Troy, has seen two of her children successfully experience the Troy educational system. Her daughter currently attends Leonard Elementary School. She has been an active parent volunteer at Troy High, Smith Middle and Leonard.

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers is pleased to honor Faith Clay for her teaching talent and tireless efforts on behalf of her fourth grade class at Bemis as a Featured Teacher for February.