

Shaping right behaviour

The most positive force to shape right behavior is affirmation and reward. A sportsman will put himself in harm's way to hear his coach praise his courage and get the acclaim of his teammates. A child shines when a parent praises them for *who they* are, as well as what they do. To hear mum say "I am so proud of you," a girl will do almost anything. The discipline philosophy of the party is first and foremost positive. Wise teachers "catch them being good" add affirmation to students and build correct behavior. Such a teacher says to the class, "It is so good to see the students over there working quietly". That is more powerful than directing negative comments to the one or two students off task.

A time does come when there is a rebellious and disrespectful attitude and then sanctions are called for. In the natural order if a person drives recklessly, ultimately an accident will occur. One can't keep driving through red lights with impunity. Gravity will bring a teenager to the ground if they persist in doing silly dangerous activities. Those who choose to steal or lie, enjoy some success but inevitably get caught out and consequences follow. The wise teacher and parent wants to protect the young people from serious consequences like a criminal record, injury or even death. The sanctions they impose as punishment are an early warning system. Its beyond the comprehension of a child to understand that playing with fire or a dangerous tool, will cause major harm in some cases. It is kinder to administer corporal punishment in a non-emotive, considered way, for reasoning powers are not sufficiently developed in the child at that point in time.

Children will challenge boundaries to see if they hold fast. The parent and teacher expect this from time to time, and will show that absolutes like curfew time are not constantly up for discussion and negotiation. "Because you have kept to curfew and been home for the last 10 weeks at the agreed time, we will extend curfew time by an hour starting next week." This will motivate the teenager to comply much more than a punishment oriented regime that constantly harps on: "Be home on time or else.."

Punishment and sanctions are part of the real social world. An athlete, who drinks too much alcohol, misses training or who shows selfish attitudes is put off the team. An employee who is habitually late is sacked. The social world mirrors the physical world.

Children and students learn best, and nurture is richest where the environment is stable, predictable and consistent. The student, who shows disrespect and robs the class of an optimal learning environment or who makes social and informal school time awful for others, calls for discipline actions. A teacher can put to the student a choice, "If you behave this way and make wise choices the consequences arebut if you are disrespectful and show bad attitudes then the consequences are the following sanctions..... now you choose". The student then is put in a situation where they are making the choice and accepting that a consequence follows. That consequence might be corporal punishment. All behavior sanctions have been abused in times past, but it's a weak argument to

take the exceptions to try to rule out the mainstream. Cars, alcohol and guns kill people. We don't as a consequence ban all three. Corporal punishment has been misused, but it is not a law that it is as a practice wrong and bad.

Where corporal punishment fails to change behavior is when the chastised person comes from a home environment of abuse. If a big brother or step-dad is always beating a young boy capriciously, it's possible that he replicates the power dominance behavior at school, and hurts people smaller and less physical than him. A student who is always late, often out of uniform, and rarely presenting homework might sleep in a variety of dwellings across the week and be doing all she can just to keep moving forward. In cases counseling, prayer, and a range of alternative support strategies are going to be much more efficient in changing behavior than physical correction.

The goal of discipline, positive affirmation and sanctions, is to ultimately see behavior internalized. A school can have an overt discipline ethos where there is a strong corrective presence of staff. But when the students are away from school and sense they are free of the threat of sanction, the desired behavior can vanish. This is because it's not resulted in attitude change, just external compliance.

Consistency is a key dimension of discipline. Students in a particular school behave well for all teachers but one "weak" teacher. This teacher threatens punishment a lot but doesn't follow through; he is talked out of taking action at the end of the day. Or he gives out rewards too freely so a low effort gets recognition in the same way a high effort result does. Essentially the teacher is out of sync with the school policy and his professional teaching peers, he is the weak link. In the home children might find that one parent is "soft" and not willing to defend the agreed boundaries. One might think that this is the mum, but quite often it's dad who has less contact with the children and naturally wants that little contact to be affectionate and positive. He can undo what the mum has worked hard to build up. He teaches the children that discipline boundaries are porous and that every choice in behavior is up for exhaustive negotiation every time. The child will become a teen and learn too late that here is no negotiating with a police officer when pulled over for speeding, no discussion with a shop owner when caught stealing produce, no give and take with the boss when work is done in a tardy way that annoys customers.

Discipline makes athletes, musicians and actors great. Discipline is the structure that produces saints for the word disciple shares the same etymology. In every age there is a call to throw off discipline and embrace freedom. The tedious discipline of learning to spell in an orthodox way and memorization of mathematics tables was overthrown some decades back so that students would have the freedom to learn to read and calculate grasping the basics by osmosis for society. What was the result? A generation who were weak in the basics of literacy and numeracy. To choose license over discipline is to choose the broad and easy road. But life on this planet rewards the one who chooses discipline. The farmer who sows regardless of prevailing weather, the student who is at their desk consistently, the salesman who knocks on doors regardless of

rejection, the artist who tries and tries again to produce the desired high standard artwork.

Parents and teachers who raise children and teachers with license and who have a default practice of trying to constantly please the young people graduate rebellious and angry youth who find that the world doesn't comply with the false training that their home and classroom offered. Young people who come from homes and schools where they are nurtured in an environment of discipline have a key part of the roadmap that will make for successful living and possess the skills and attitudes to build a loving, but disciplined home for their own offspring. The nation's heritage is strengthened because of these adults who had the courage, and self-discipline, to build an emerging generation with the structures to make life-affirming choices.