

UN-CHARTED WATERS: **Creating Connection in the Classroom**

NASAP 2016 - Bloomington, Minnesota

Saturday, May 14, 2016,

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“An educator’s most important task, one might say his holy duty, is to see to it that no child is discouraged at school, and that a child who enters school already discouraged regains his self-confidence through his school and his teacher. This goes hand in hand with the vocation of the educator, for education is possible only with children who look hopefully and joyfully upon the future.” - Alfred Adler

“Education is not preparation for life – education is life itself.” – John Dewey

“We have harmony only among equals.” – Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D.

ON REWARDS:

“In nature, there are neither rewards nor punishments. There are only consequences.” Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) *American statesmen, orator, abolitionist, advocate of women’s right to vote.*

“The reward of a thing well done is having done it.” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“The journey is the reward.” *Chinese proverb*

“Striving for success without hard work is like trying to harvest where you haven’t planted.” *David Bly*

“The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.” *John Ruskin – (1819-1900) British artist, social thinker, philanthropist*

FIVE CRITERIA FOR “DISCIPLINE THAT TEACHES”

- Is it **RESPECTFUL**? (Kind and firm at the same time)
- Does it help children feel **BELONGING and SIGNIFICANCE**? (Connection)
- Is it effective **LONG TERM**?
- Does it **TEACH** valuable social and life **SKILLS** for good character?
- Does it invite children to discover how **CAPABLE** they are and use their power constructively?

“Positive Discipline” by Jane Nelsen, Ed. D.

THE RESULTS OF PUNISHMENT

Resentment *“This is unfair. I can’t trust adults.”*

Revenge *“They are winning now, but I’ll get even.”*

Rebellion *“I’ll do just the opposite to prove I don’t do it their way.”*

Retreat from others : *“I won’t get caught next time” or from oneself: “I’m a bad person.”* From *“Positive Discipline” by Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott. www.positivediscipline.com*

THE RESULTS OF REWARDS

Teachers/parents want their children/young people to behave and often use rewards or positive incentives as a replacement for punishment. Some use both rewards and punishments. We propose that *neither rewards nor punishments* are helpful in teaching young people to become ethical, caring responsible adults. Why do we say this?

1. Rewards and punishments are two sides of the same coin: they both aim to *control* behavior instead of focusing on *teaching*. Rewards and punishment model the use of *power* as a means of solving problems.
2. Rewards and punishments are forms of *“doing to” and “doing for”* students instead of *“doing with”* students. They don’t invite young people to learn from within or teach cooperative problem solving, both necessary skills in today’s world.
3. Rewards and punishments *distract* students from the *real* issues. The young person becomes more concerned with avoiding the punishment or gaining the reward than learning the *intrinsic value* of the appropriate decision or activity itself.
4. Rewards and punishments erode our *relationships* with our children. Relationships are the most important tool for *influencing* development.

Rewards:

- **Eventually lose their effectiveness.** The young person loses interest in “working for” the reward, or may want rewards that are more appealing (bigger, better).
- **May bring temporary “obedience,”** but never help a child develop a commitment to a task or action when there is no “payoff.”

- **Teach young people to be self-centered.** They learn to think, “What’s in it for me?” instead of doing the activity simply because it is worth doing for its own sake or may be beneficial to others.
- **Are discouraging.** They are conditional on the successful completion of the task. *Without successful completion, the withholding of the reward turns it into a “punishment” because from the child’s perspective the child is denied something promised.*
- **Erode intrinsic motivation.** The young person does not have the opportunity to develop an interest or liking in the activity on its own merits. They are denied the opportunity to make a genuine contribution, the foundation for feeling responsible and capable (belonging and significance).
- **De-value or degrade the task or action needed,** as the “reward” is presented as more important.
- **Interfere with self-esteem.** They create dependency upon an outside person for approval rather than a conscientious evaluation by the young person of her own efforts.

Instead of rewards.... focus on solutions with your students/children:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solve together. • Share your enjoyment of working together in the classroom/home. • Avoid making everyday tasks seem like a burden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make agreements and follow through. • Invite the student/child to contribute to the class/home by having a job. • Teach and hold class/family meetings.
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Prepared by Lois Ingber, LCSW, 2008. Sources: *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott, and *Unconditional Parenting* and *Punished by Rewards* by Alfie Kohn. Other sources with current research are *Drive* by Daniel Pink and *Mindset* by Carol Dweck.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR INVITING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

IN GENERAL: Take baby steps! Continue what you have been already doing. Start by just noticing. Then try one new tool, i.e., Asking vs. Telling. Keep adding tools and building relationship before moving from external motivators to those of connection, encouragement, empowerment and mutual respect.

IN THE HOME:

- Maintain positive outlook and self care for being present; stress management
- “Connection before Correction”
- View and value each child as an individual
- Routine Charts (NOT sticker charts)
- Family Meetings
- Kindness and Firmness
- Make agreements / Find Solutions Together
- Invite cooperation by giving responsibility
- Show confidence in the child(ren)
- Encouragement vs. Praise
- Do activities “together with”

- Use mistakes as opportunities to learn
- Create a Positive Time Out, “Cool Down” space as an option to re-gather (not “sent to”)
- Understand the belief behind the behavior
- Allowance (vs. rewards for chores, homework, etc.)
- Acknowledge feelings of disappointment and not try to “fix” their feelings to make/keep them happy.
- “I notice...”
- Curiosity/Motivational Questions

IN THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL:

- Maintain positive outlook and self care for being present; stress management
- “Connection before Correction”
- Value each student and what they bring to the classroom - Encouragement
- Classroom jobs
- Teach the “Essential Skills” of Positive Discipline in the Classroom
- Class Meetings
- Establish routines for easier transitions
- Make agreements / Find Solutions Together
- “Train-ing for Success” worksheets
- Use mistakes as opportunities to learn
- Create a Positive Time Out, “Cool Down” space as an option (not “sent to”)
- Build relationships: 2 x 10
- Class culture of encouragement
- Create class guidelines together
- “I notice...”
- Curiosity/Motivational Questions
- Frequent positive communication with parents
- Incorporate opportunities for contribution and connection as the foundation of Behavior Intervention Plans
- Have parent/teacher/student meetings. Plan with the student how to lead these and share their reflections of accomplishments, goals
- Include student in SST’s, IEP’s and determine mutually agreeable goals

RESOURCES AND LINKS

<http://positivediscipline.com> Website for Positive Discipline

<http://positivediscipline.org>. Positive Discipline Assn. Training and education arm of Positive Discipline

<http://alfredadler.org>. North American Society of Adlerian Psychology

<http://mindsetonline.com/> Website of Carol Dweck

<http://danpink.com> Website of Daniel Pink

www.drdansiegel.com. Website of Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.