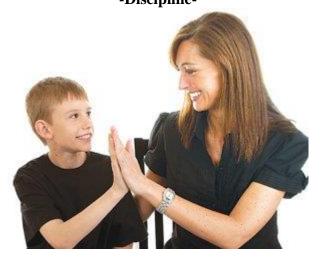# Alternatives to Punishment
-Discipline-

Discipline: training that corrects; bringing under control; imposing order on.

Gordon Neufeld warns us that consequences (punishments) are a "trick" meant to embellish your direction. As parents we sometimes take away those things that are most important to our children as a means of punishing them. Unfortunately, taking away those things that a child has formed a relationship with (friends and contact with them through grounding, computers, games, TV, phones, etc.) may result in the child backing out of the parental relationship. Without that relationship in place, all your interventions are meaningless!

In delivering discipline to your child avoid the following:

1 – Too much separation from you, as this can burn bridges.

2 – Too much shame directed toward the child as this affects self-esteem.

3 – Any interaction that would cause the child to feel unsafe.

In order for this method of discipline to work the child must have:

1. A working relationship with you

2. A soft heart (willingness to feel and express emotions, vulnerability)

3. A safe place to cry and express emotions

Basic Steps

Joining in attention   Calming down   Coaxing conflicting feelings   Finding a win/win solution

1. Collect the attention of your child by joining them in what they are being attentive to. Use active listening and make a statement or ask a question that gets agreement from the child. Then intercept their attention by obtaining eye-contact and try for a smile or touch.

2. Encourage your child to settle down if he or she is upset – breathing. Use an "I" statement here.

3. Coax conflicting feelings within your child.

4. Together, look for a win/win solution.

5. Implement the solution and make encouraging statements. Tell your child how his or her cooperation has affected you.

Fostering Attachment Relationships

➢ Children will be contrary to requests until you create relationship every day.

➢ Collecting a child's attention builds relationship, as does the use of observational and non-judgmental validating statements.

➢ If a child is driven by counterwill impulses, we would want to pull into awareness strong feelings of attachment, of wanting to please, or desire to measure up to expectations.

➢ However, we need to delay this intervention until the intensity of feelings has eased somewhat.

➢ We need to get outside the incident in which the problem occurs and inside the relationship where we can take the lead prior to coaxing conflicting feelings into consciousness.

For example:
Two siblings are fighting over the use of the TV.

1. Collect the children's attention. State observation of what is happening, use active listening and "I" statement.
(Observation) "It sounds like both of you have different ideas about what show you want to watch and you are having trouble solving this problem"

(Active Listening) "Jordan, you want to watch Sponge Bob. Beth, you want to watch the documentary about medieval church architecture, but you both can't watch your shows at the same time, and neither of you think it is fair if you give up your show. Is that right?" (Notice that this is part of collecting their attention: getting agreement).

2. Encourage Children to settle down and using an "I" statement.
"Let's just take a deep breath here and slow things down a bit. I know I feel upset when I hear the two of you arguing. I need you to find a peaceful solution."

3. Coaxing Conflicting Feelings.
"In our family we choose to share many things. We share our food, we share our toys, we share our time with one another. We can also share our TV and how to solve this problem, even when you both want something different."

4. Looking for win/win solution
"Both of you know how to solve problems and negotiate – so do I – and we've done it before. What solutions can we think of together that we can all feel good about?"

Likely the kids will be motivated to find a solution quickly. Perhaps use another TV, record the show, one chooses to do something else equally enjoyable, etc.

5. Implement the solution and make encouraging statements. Tell the children how their behaviour affects you.
"Wow, now that's the way to solve a problem. You found a solution that works for both of you. I feel relieved that the conflict is over, and I'm so proud of the two of you."

Other Solutions

Scripting the behaviour is used when the child is not yet mature enough to generate the desired intentions and behaviours from within. It can be implemented like this:

1. Focus on relationship using language and action to support it.

2. Collect the child's attention: shared focus, agreement, proximity for touch, eye-contact and smile.

3. Model the correct behaviour and state the correct behaviour in positive and specific terms.

Examples:

"This is a time to be quiet and respectful of other's feelings" – like at a funeral.

"We use the sidewalk to show respect for the homeowner's property."

"We keep up with the group so the leaders know where we are and can know that we are safe."

"It is appropriate to send a thank-you note to your grandma so she knows how much you appreciate her thoughtfulness."

Scripting can address: fairness, helping, sharing, cooperation, conversation, gentleness, consideration, getting along, etc.