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TEACHERS OR TAUNTERS: THE DILEMMA OF TRUE DISCIPLINE FOR DIRECT CARE WORKERS WITH CHILDREN

Lorraine E. Fox
San Clemente, CA

ABSTRACT: Direct care workers with children are continually challenged by the need to intervene with unacceptable behavior presented by children in treatment-oriented facilities. This behavior often taxes the workers, tempting them to respond in ways that are punitive and/or unhelpful rather than therapeutic for the child/adolescent. The author contends that a thoughtful approach, with close attention to the goals and purposes of intervention, the mutuality of the process, the process of change and the nature of worker task as change agents will promote professional practices that are in the best interests of the youngsters in care.

Professional child/youth care workers, teachers, teacher's aides, mental health workers, recreation leaders, and parents seem to find themselves most taxed, frustrated, and challenged when confronted with unacceptable behavior that requires intervention and "management." Behavior management workshops are among the first to fill up at training conferences. Behavior management problems are usually the first to be raised by parents in classes and parenting support groups. Direct care providers search for "a bag of tricks" to use in managing the behavior of children in their charge. And there are many tricks, or "techniques" as we often call them. These techniques are useful and necessary in our work with children and young people, but equally, if not more important, is the conceptual framework from which we view behavior, and the goals for our interventions with disruptive or "inappropriate" behaviors.

When we are able to empathically view/understand seemingly troubled behavior and when we become clear about the purpose of intervention with such behavior, we can become expert and creative in designing and selecting techniques and interventions to achieve treatment objectives. Knowing how to think about the purposes of behavior and interventions is as important as knowing what to do. Informed thinking and goal setting can result in helpful, effective, and nonpunitive interventions.

Distinguishing Between Discipline and Punishment

The terms discipline, punishment, and consequences are often used

in discussion, and consequently in practice, as if they were the same things. They are not. It is my conviction that an important ingredient in the developing knowledge base which forms the base for the profession of Child Care Work is the ability to be clear about the distinctions, and then to administer each according to deliberate plan and thoughtful intent.

The literal meaning of the term "to discipline" is to teach. True "disciples" are learners! If we intervene with behavior with any intent other than to teach, we are not administering true discipline!

According to Webster, "to punish" means to penalize, to cause pain, loss, or suffering for a wrongdoing; to treat in a harsh manner. This literal meaning has often been lost or blurred in child care literature, and although I have great respect for many of the writers and teachers who engaged in redefinitions, I have come to believe that the comingling of terms to describe similar practices has led to a kind of confusion and blending of motives that often causes harm, or at least a lack of benefit, to youngsters who come into treatment following long years of "harsh" treatment in other environments.

Redl went to great lengths to redefine punishment in positive terms in a number of writings, and went so far as to say that "as educators or clinicians, our behavior toward children deserves the name punishment only if it is done with a clearcut goal to help the child" (1980). The ambiguity of the word "help" used in this context is worrisome to me because I fear that it can be seen to give permission for hurtful practices under the guise of helping children. Silberman gives support for this fear by reminding us that in the interest of efficiency, discipline has often been defined in "simple but rigid terms," coming to mean the absence of noise and movement, and the equating of discipline with obedience and submission (1970). Herschel Alt discussed the intermixing of terms in his work on *Residential Treatment for the Disturbed Child*, stating that "discipline took on harsh form similar to those traditionally employed in reformatories and prisons" (1960). This blurring of concepts has been acknowledged by Redl, even as he defended use of the term punishment in a positive way, when he declared that, "the usage of the term punishment, being as loose as it is, we often discuss under the same label situations where we demand that a child 'make up' for a hurt he has inflicted, or a damage he has caused" (1980). One can argue, of course, that making reparation can "teach a child a lesson." I agree, but would argue that when dealing with emotionally troubled youngsters we cannot assume this unless the act of reparation is framed in a way that is *not* harsh or punitive, since most child care professionals admit that mere "punishment" is not effective with troubled youth who have histories of being treated

in painful or disregarding ways. (Redl, 1980; Krueger, 1980; Long and Newman, 1980). Krueger reminds us that the very definition of punishment implies that what is important is whether the offender experiences discomfort, not whether there is a logical connection between the offense and the discomfort (1980) — a connection that is difficult, if not impossible, for some emotionally damaged children. Krueger goes on to support the notion that discipline has been ineffective if a child does not learn more appropriate behavior (1980) and this "learning" is more certainly assured by the administration of discipline than of punishment.

Clarifying the Goals of Intervention

Once clear about the distinctions between discipline (which we shall define as an intervention designed to teach a new behavior or way of thinking) and punishment (which we shall define as interventions designed merely to impose penalities or discomfort) we can move more easily into a consideration of the purposes or goals for adult intervention (sometimes interference) with unacceptable behavior.

When we intervene and take something away (points, privileges, tokens, etc.), a very common practice in many agencies, or when we intervene in a way that is harsh, or that causes physical or emotional pain, we are punishing, no matter what we call it. I think a reference to the *intention* to teach is important here. As we mentioned earlier, one might argue that we cannot avoid teaching even when administering punishment. In a sense it is true that a child learns something from every interaction, even if what (s)he learns is that adults can be cruel, that might often triumphs over right(s), that they "deserve" to be hurt, etc. Our children have "learned" many things about the world that we wish they hadn't learned. It seems to me that one of our primary tasks is to teach new lessons. We need to teach lessons about their worth and about the reality of fairness and available warmth and caring in the world. Children in treatment facilities do not need to learn about the harsh realities of life, but about the counter realities. This notion compounds our problem and task in thinking about and administering discipline. It forces us to look at each intervention from a stance that asks: "What am I teaching this child at this moment; what is (s)he learning from my behavior in response to her/his behavior? What do I want, or need, to teach this child at this moment? What will be helpful in gaining better control over her/his thoughts and behavior?"

Discipline requires the ability to separate motive from action. We know, but sometimes we forget, that all behavior is purposeful. Even

though we sometimes claim it in our frustration, nothing is ever done "for no reason at all." Behavior is tied to a goal; to meeting a need. It often takes considerable skill to see and understand the meaning a particular behavior has to a child. It also takes patience and respect for a young person's motives. Many times we decide what a child was "up to"; and many times I think we are wrong. Learning to discover the motives of behavior is crucial in view of the aims of discipline, since I can't teach another way of meeting a need until I know which need the behavior was directed at meeting. Sometimes it's as simple as asking. It's amazing how often we don't bother. Sometimes it's true that even the child doesn't know exactly what (s)he was wanting or needing. That's why they need us! They need us not to slap penalties on them, but to help them figure out what they wanted/needed, and how they can go about getting it without being disruptive or destructive. I have never seen a child or young person who wanted or needed anything "bad." I have always been able to approve of the need they were trying to meet, if not the method they chose to meet the need. I believe that many times kids simply don't know how to get what they want in a way that is acceptable to us and healthy for them. They have never learned. With these lessons lacking, their behavior backfires on them. Not only do they not get what they were after, but they get a lot they didn't bargain for. What fertile ground for teaching and learning. For discipline.

It seems important to keep in mind that if kids in treatment centers knew how to meet their needs more "appropriately" (i.e., acceptably, to us), they wouldn't be there and they wouldn't need us. But they do need us. They need us to provide discipline; to tell them not only what to stop, but what to start. In this way, discipline allows us to reaffirm while correcting. I can support what you want and need. I cannot support your methods, but I can teach you ways to meet your needs that will benefit you, the group, and our relationship. This kind of interaction allows us to be very clear and firm about expectations for acceptable behavior while allowing the youngster to learn a little about what is causing his/her behavior. We are also able to learn other possibilities for meeting the need without disrupting relationships and the individual's well-being. Discipline allows us to move into and past the specific behavior in one interaction. Rather than punishing someone for throwing rocks and issuing commands that they stop throwing rocks (which will no doubt be ignored if there is no new learning), discipline allows us to confront the unacceptable behavior, impose a meaningful, related consequence, work with the child on how the behavior has backfired, and teach a new behavior.

At this point it seems necessary to give some consideration to the

notion of "consequences." According to the dictionary, a consequence is "that which naturally follows from a preceding action." The key word for us, in the context of this discussion, is the word "naturally." How many times do the consequences we impose in response to unacceptable behavior have a natural connection to the behavior? What does a loss of points have to do with a clean room? Or a broken window? How does the 'privilege' of watching television relate to having trouble in gym class? How frequently, though, are these kinds of totally unrelated "consequences" levied against a child with no further work to provide the discipline, the teaching, and the learning! The imposition of reasonable, connected consequences becomes natural for the skilled child care worker, teacher, or parent when the concept of discipline is kept in mind: consequences designed with the specific aim of teaching the youngster something related to his/her inability, at this point, to behave (and meet needs) in a more acceptable manner. Glasser's notion of "responsible behavior" in fulfilling needs is very applicable here. It supports the idea of discipline as part of "reality therapy" in learning to meet our needs in ways that are both successful and respectful (1965). This does not imply that point systems are ineffective or that point losses and gains are not a part of good child care practice. It does imply, however, that point losses and other deprivations, in and of themselves, do not provide discipline. The point/token/privilege loss is the easy part; the difficult and challenging part, the intervention part, is the related teaching consequence that accompanies the loss, the part that will change the deprivation into a learning experience. When we lose sight of this, we are likely to witness a scene that is all too familiar in treatment: a useless, combative, frustrating cycle of point/privilege deprivation that often "bankrupts" the child, and exhausts and demoralizes both the child and the caretaker. A continual focus on the goal of intervention, i.e., the teaching of new perspectives and behaviors, will prevent what Whittaker cautions against when referring to discipline and punishment as "conspicuously missing" a focus on the teaching of life skills (1979). Whittaker reminds us that the therapeutic milieu provides us with a rich environment allowing a variety of formats for teaching alternative behaviors, and the professionally oriented child care worker will learn to develop a broad range of disciplining interventions when focusing on the mission to teach, and re-teach, and feeling freed from the burden merely to penalize.

Finally, when considering the goals of intervention, we want to remember that many, or most times, children do not see the world the way we do. Children with damaged egos, or with inadequate or undeveloped egos are unable (not unwilling!) to see things as we see them or as we would like them to see them. One of our major tasks in

treatment, and in providing discipline, is to find a way to enable a child with a fragile ego, a distorted and damaged sense of self, and a frequently hostile/suspicious view of adults and the world, to learn something as a result of our interventions and interactions. It's as if some children's egos are similar to damaged eyes: people who need glasses to see the board cannot see the board without their glasses. It's not that they refuse to see the board; it's not that they are unwilling; they are unable! We could threaten, bribe, or take away privileges all day, demanding that they read the board without their glasses, to no avail. Many children/youth we work with in care have similar problems with regard to their perception of the world; they just can't see things as we do, or as they are. How can we provide them with a pair of emotional glasses, a different, more accurate way of perceiving things? This is no easy task! It's easier to avoid the challenge and simply send a child to her/his room, or keep him/her home from an outing. These punitive actions, however, will only serve to reinforce their notions of the world. Discipline, instead of punishment, will afford an opportunity to do our job, to teach, and not to hurt. Approaching behavior from this perspective allows us to "actively engage" troublesome "acting out" behavior, as opposed to merely suppressing it through punitive sanction (Long and Newman, 1980).

Discipline As a Mutual Process

Discipline is a mutual process and requires an interaction: it requires a teacher and a learner, it requires mutual effort; it requires positive motivation on the part of adult and child. Discipline is not something that can be done to someone. My experience after nearly twenty-five years of workshops and conferences, staff meetings, and on-the-spot exchanges, is that attention is usually focused primarily, or entirely, on the child/teen. This seems to me not only unfair, but not helpful, since the child accounts for only one-half of the necessary exchange for discipline to occur. I am convinced that both the children's and the staff's needs would be better served if we spent as much time and energy examining our own motives and behaviors as we do the youngsters. We are engaged in a field that demands personal energy and investment to be professional! Our work meets many of our own needs, as well as those of the children/youth we care for. Basic needs are just that — basic. These needs are present in all: rich and poor, black, brown, and white, troubled and healthy, young and not so young. It seems that a failure to acknowledge this accounts for much of the punishment that occurs in lieu of nonpunitive discipline. At any moment in time, both children and adults are behaving in ways that are

designed to meet basic needs, the same needs. Adult needs for safety, belonging, love, esteem, etc., are no less powerful or commanding than those of the children. Neither are they more powerful. Often a problem arises in adult/child interactions because the behavior of the child/youth interferes with or threatens our feelings of safety, our need to feel loved, or to feel good about our abilities. For this reason it requires extra effort on our part, to keep the needs of the children foremost — evidenced by providing discipline rather than punishment — when we are feeling like they are behaving "against us," or our love/care for them is not being returned, or we are doubtful about our abilities because they refuse to comply with our requests and demands. It is not immature or unprofessional to admit our needs; rather, I believe it is unprofessional *not* to admit our needs. If we keep them out of our awareness they will surely be expressed in ways that are harmful to those in our care; consequently we will be unsatisfied. We must learn to acknowledge and address our feelings in order to avoid blaming and punishing the kids for not meeting our needs. We can develop our competence so that we can recognize the feelings that arise from having our own needs threatened, and prevent these feelings from interfering with the administration of respectful discipline.

Much of the behavior we are called upon to witness and attempt to correct is repugnant to us, and is often an affront to our own values. Names we are called would not have been tolerated by the adults in our lives. Many of the behaviors we see every day were never acknowledged in our families, schools, or churches. We can acknowledge that if "our" kids acted the way our parents/teachers/ministers told us kids were supposed to act, they wouldn't need treatment and they wouldn't be in our facilities. But at the same time our insides still get outraged when they do what they do! This is important to think about because it colors our interactions and interventions and often tempts us to want to hurt (punish) rather than help (discipline). Our feelings and repulsion tempt us to believe that kids are doing things to us, rather than to meet their needs in the only way they know. Our language often conveys these beliefs; for instance, we ask, "did the kids give you a bad time?", as opposed to "did the kids have a bad night?" How often do we refer to the kids as "making our lives miserable," or "not cooperating with us," clouding the fact that for the most part our lives are not an issue for them. They are trying to deal with their own lives. They act miserably because they are miserable, not because they want to do something to us.

The entire disciplinary situation is thus complicated by our own feelings and needs: our feelings, based on our own rearing, about the way children "should" behave and respond to adults, the way we were

taught to respond. Most adults do not take well to having their rules broken, or their "structure" not followed. We were taught that adults were to be respected and obeyed. Children in treatment neither respect or obey: if they could, they would not need treatment. How often though do we arrive for work with well laid plans for pleasant events only to have them shattered by a fight, a broken window, a refusal to participate. Our emotional responses are (more often than not, regardless of our education or experience) to be agitated and unhappy with the offending youngster(s) and to feel personally upset and defied. Then we try to plan, to treat, to avoid the urge to punish (to do to someone else's day what they have done to ours), and to provide an opportunity to learn a better way of handling things. We stand there feeling like the altruistic, caring, nurturing, teaching caretaker and like a ticked-off adult who is angry, insulted, hurt and frustrated. The part of all adults that expects compliance, that gets caught up in status, that hates being defied and called names, makes it very hard to discipline. To move past this requires work: Child Care Work.

Also it seems worthwhile to consider that Child Care Workers usually do not have mainstream social ambitions. We do not work for money or for prestige. Male child care workers are often asked when they will get "real jobs." Females wait for the professional recognition — not just credit for fulfilling motherly instincts. When off duty, child care workers are not known for faithfully following societal "rules." It's always been interesting to me to observe the contrast between child care worker's values at and away from work. Off duty we follow our own heads and hearts: we speed if we're late for work; we date according to our hearts and not for the approval of our parents or society; we resist war and drafts; we eschew material values. But once at work we become the paragons of rule enforcement, watching for infractions, punishing deviations from our expectations no matter how energized the reasons from the child. Trieschman, Whittaker, and Brendtro caution us in their classic work, *The Other 23 Hours*, of the need to check our own anti-social impulses by exercising excessive control over impulsive children, which may sometimes be a reaction formation which hampers the goals of treatment (1969). This is said in the context of recognition that "control and management of disturbed children is a large and important part of the duties of child care workers" (p. 228) so we can see that it is not a caution against managing behavior, but against allowing our personal agendas to interfere with appropriate discipline.

An additional area for consideration while contemplating the mutuality of the process is a review of our own catalogue of personal childhood experiences, from which we draw when dealing with chil-

dren, that includes a host of "interventions" (most of us called these interferences with behavior from adults by other names) that were not particularly designed to provide true discipline. Many of our parents were at least honest and openly announced that we were "going to be punished." Now that roles are reversed, and we are the interveners (interferers), we are often tempted to fall back on familiar patterns of intervention, even though we rarely consciously admit to ourselves or the world that we were out to punish children. What often seems to happen, based on a combination of our own childhood experiences, or unmet needs, and a lack of clarity about the nature of discipline, is that we say "discipline," but practice "punishment." This may take the form of ignoring, or simply reacting. It is a helpful exercise sometimes to recall some "consequences" we received that felt very unfair, or even "mean," and to use this review not to revile those adults from our childhood who imposed them, for they did not claim to be professional, but to learn from them and to use the learning to enlighten our work with our youngsters.

Consistency is a big word in child care circles and it should be. Consistency applies not only to expectations and structure, but to the need for consensus among caretaking adults about the motives and aims for managing behavior. This requires a great deal more effort than making sure dinner is served promptly and that the homework hour is kept. It requires that we talk to each other about each other, and about ourselves, as well as about the kids. It requires that we work to overcome our human inclinations and that we become willing to call each other on punitive responses and interactions. It requires that we develop our own self-awareness, and that we become willing to use this awareness to change things about ourselves, as well as to focus on the changes we desire for the youngsters in our care. In addition to confronting unwanted behavior, we need to learn to confront unwanted motives in ourselves.

These tasks are difficult, but not unpleasant. Discipline is always more positive than punishment. It feels better not only to the child, but to us. The mutuality gives a child an ally in his/her struggle to feel better and act better, not just a taskmaster. Learning feels good. Having someone take the time to teach you something helps you feel cared about. Being able to teach feels good too.

Thinking and the Application of Techniques: A Search for a Therapeutic Balance

The nature of, and need for, discipline requires that we develop a deeper understanding of the interface between expectations and ther-

apeutic intervention when expectations are not met, rather than defining our role only as that of setting limits and clarifying expectations. It requires that we learn to treat children and adolescents as full human beings, due all of the respect that we afford each other and expect for ourselves. It means that we sit down and talk things over, learn to see things from their point of view, get in touch with the needs they are trying to meet with their behavior — however bizarre or unacceptable—and lend ourselves to them as allies for change. We are change agents, and that is the focus of our behavior management interventions. We are not mere custodians of the structure or resources for keeping order/control. Discipline asks us to be sure we can explain the reason for the rule, not just to enforce the rule. It asks us to give up some of our pet phrases, such as "because I said so," or "because I'm on duty," or "because that's the way it is here." We give these up because they do not teach. While the search for effective "techniques" is on-going, and always in order, so is the need to remember that controlling techniques are by no means a final solution (Krueger, 1980), and to keep in mind that reliance on "handed down" techniques alone can actually serve to reduce your power and effectiveness in a given situation, if not combined with an individualized, practical consequence to provide the learning. Krueger reminds us that even "selecting proper intervention techniques requires a great deal of preparation, communication, and thought" (1980). No child care professional can be considered competent in his/her job without a wide array of planful, respectful, effective techniques to be utilized in the management of difficult/destructive behavior. At the same time, we need to be leery of employing a technique we learned in a workshop or saw demonstrated by another worker without careful consideration of its usefulness in a particular situation, with a particular child, to reach a particular goal. It is not as important to know what I would do in a given situation as it is to begin to instinctively evaluate each situation; to become clear with regard to the specific goals of an intervention; to design or implement an interventive technique that will be suitable for the child and the incident, and that will produce results that favor the well-being of the individual youngster, the group, and adult(s) in charge. This approach will utilize our creativity and ingenuity, will maximize the potential for effective use of proven techniques, and will lead to results that enhance our relationships with children/youth in our care and increase our own sense of competence.

Discipline As an Ingredient in the Process of Change

Although learning has intrinsic rewards, giving up familiar and

comfortable behaviors and replacing them with new ones represents a major change, and children, like most of us, are likely to resist efforts to change. It is important to understand discipline in this context so that we do not become discouraged or disheartened or tempted to refer to old ways of intervening when our new approach doesn't yield immediate results. Change, if it is to last, most often occurs gradually, in increments, and will often be barely perceptible. For this reason, we must be committed to the "rightness" of the process and goal, and thus be willing to persist when the learning is as slow as learning often is. It is helpful to keep in mind how long the old behaviors have been in place and how they were learned during long years in unhealthy/disturbed environments before coming to us. Krueger reminds us that we need to care enough to show our children and young people that they have the potential to change (1980). He goes on to remind us that "we seek to create an environment where all the participants — children and staff — are interdependent; care about one another and are willing to challenge, support and aid each other in the process of growth and change." Change is also the desired outcome of punishment, as Redl reminds us that that "the use of punishment implies an attempt to produce an experience for the child which is unpleasant—based on the assumption that sometimes the affliction of an unpleasant experience may mobilize 'something' in a child which, without such a 'boost from without,' would not have occurred" (1980). The prompting for a change in behavior, sought by the imposition of either discipline or punishment, will most often be considered as unpleasant by the child. The ingredient that will be different in distinguishing between the two will be the motive of the adult structuring the consequence.

Discipline in Action: Some Requirements and Characteristics

Discipline takes more time, and requires more work than punishment. Discipline requires that we do a lot of thinking before and during the intervention, and asks that we design, not merely administer, an intervention that will teach the young person something about the situation, or about him/herself, and that it will enable the individual to handle it better next time. We must consider who are behaving in the unacceptable way, what we know about their history and makeup that helps us understand why they are meeting their needs in an inappropriate way, and how we can provide an intervention and consequence that will facilitate effective learning. Discipline, as a practice concept, is often avoided in favor of more punitive interventions simply because of the demands on staff time and energy. It's easier to have charts on the wall, spelling out consequences for all manner of

misbehavior, to take things away, to send someone to his/her room to "think," than to take the time to evaluate each incident of unacceptable behavior, to use our knowledge of the child and of individual and group dynamics to understand the reason for the behavior and to devise a consequence geared for the needs of the individual youngster.

Discipline requires a focus on the individual. Similar behavior does not spring, necessarily, from similar or predictable motivation. Each child must be considered in terms of his/her background, present coping skills, treatment needs, and abilities for learning. Six children may run away together, but each will run for his/her own, individual reasons. Discipline will not allow all six to be given the same consequence, because the necessary learning will be different for each. Who left because they have trouble controlling their impulses? Who left because they couldn't say "no" to others in the group? Who left because in the past it has been safer to leave than to stay? Each has something to learn; each has a different capacity to learn; each deserves the respect to be seen and treated as a unique person with unique needs. Each deserves discipline.

Discipline cannot be forced. Punishment can be forced, but we cannot force anybody to learn. It thus becomes our task to provide the opportunity, to structure a learning situation, to give it our best shot. It becomes our task to give the learning the time.

Discipline enhances a child's self-image. Punishment damages a sense of self-worth. I don't believe that it's true that children enjoy misbehaving and falling out of favor with the important adults in their lives. I believe, instead, that "acting up" is all some children know. It feels comfortable, it makes them feel like themselves, it enhances their negative self-images. I have never seen any evidence that it makes them feel good. Learning new ways to behave and handle emotions and difficult situations, learning more about themselves, learning that someone cares enough to struggle with them to help them change: this, I believe, feels good. Discipline allows the development of personal competence, and the sustaining of positive relationships with important adults, building a sense of worth and value. Isn't this our commitment?

Discipline is hampered by previous life experiences. Kids who come into placement are, for the most part, undisciplined. They have been punished a lot; they've been ignored. Neither punishment or uninvolvement teaches responsible behavior. A lifetime of being ignored or punished does not make it easy to receive discipline. Children tempt us to do what would be easier for us anyway, to ignore them, or punish them. It is a challenge not to respond in the way they solicit, and that makes them feel comfortable. Abused kids elicit abuse; they act as if

they would rather be made to suffer, to be called names, to be yelled at or hit. They would rather be sent to their rooms (ignored) than to be disciplined. Most don't feel they are worth discipline! They don't understand our willingness to invest the time and effort. This willingness and investment, I believe, is at the heart of treatment! This is hard to keep "up front" in our minds when they get up in our face and beg us to punish them; when they wreck our nights and ruin our days.

Discipline is hard just because we're human. Sometimes we have bad days. Sometimes we envy them the treatment they are getting at our hands because we'd like to have some for ouselves. Sometimes we're just plain tired and irritated. These times call on all of our reserves, and all of our personal and professional commitment. We are here to treat them better than they were treated before we met them; to treat them better than we were/are treated; and to treat them better than we'd sometimes like to treat them.

Discipline, like love, requires patience and kindness. Punishment can be swift and impulsive. Who hasn't, in a flash of anger and frustration, been tempted to take away someone's bathroom privileges, to ground them for two years, to send them to their rooms until they "grow up?" The commitment to provide discipline in these moments is much like the commitment to love the unlovable. It takes patience to explain and relate a consequence, to be sure that the behavior enables us to provide a clear explanation for intervention, and to construct a consequence that changes, rather than confirms, a negative view of the world.

Discipline can be proactive as well as reactive. In fact, it is possible on many occasions to recognize that corrective discipline is necessary because of a failure to provide preventive teaching interventions. Selfishly, it is far more useful, less exhausting, and more pleasant to spend time with youngsters preventing misbehavior than anxiously awaiting its occurrence and having to react to it when everyone involved is in an emotional state that decreases the chances of effective teaching and learning taking place. Too often we seem to wait for something awful to happen and then spend countless hours in meetings, consultations and ruminations deciding what to do in response. The beauty of the discipline framework is that it reminds us that, unlike punishment, which is only reactive, discpline/teaching can be done at any time. We can talk in advance about how to keep windows from being broken when Frank loses his temper; how we can handle feelings and challenges other than by running away, how to direct aggression into acceptable activities, etc. We can provide discipline in advance of disruptive behavior. We can use that well-developed ability to pick up on the warning signs, the "vibes" that signal the potential

for something getting out of hand. We can teach as prevention and save all of us the bad feeling that results from "acting out" behavior.

This focus on prevention may, in many cases, cause us to re-evaluate our reward systems for direct care staff. It is unfortunate that so many strokes are given to child care workers who are good at "handling" difficult situations. To reinforce a focus on discipline, we should stroke the child care worker who provides such good discipline that there is very little to handle. We also need to reward creative and constructive consequences, even if they appear "soft" in a context where punishment seems called for. In considering the difficult task of maintaining discipline in classroom settings, Silberman reminds of the difficulty arising when teachers become obsessed with silence and lack of movement in environments where this becomes the chief means by which their competence is judged, since this atmosphere hampers real learning (1970). He reminds us that a group cannot achieve enough maturity to keep itself under control if its members never have an opportunity to exercise control (p. 134). Rewards need to be given to workers who do not "control" the group, but who struggle with the group and its members to learn self control, with the understanding that while learning anything, the practice cannot be compared to the desired proficiency. Learning to type means a lot of misspelled words at first. And learning new behaviors requires tolerance for the approximations that will eventually lead to the desired performance.

Conclusion

Discipline is one of our primary tasks as caretakers of children. It is also one of our greatest challenges. It can be, when done as a way of life with those in our care, one of our greatest rewards.

Discipline gives kids what they come to us to get; it is easier on us than any amount of punishing; it works and it feels terrific. Watching young people change their feelings about themselves—recognizing their own value and worth—is a thrill that never leaves a worker who has toiled with and on behalf of this young one. Recognizing that disciplinary interactions, teaching kids that they deserve our time, our thought, our planning, our creativity; teaching them that love and respect can be found in this world as evidenced by the love and respect we can share with them; teaching them that they can learn to meet their needs in a way that enhances their own feelings about themselves as well as the feelings toward them of others around them; sharing the joy and confidence that comes from learning—these rewards will energize us and give us the motivational push to keep on another hour,

another day, another year.

Direct care workers tow a difficult line, searching for a blend of structure and freedom that allows children and young people the right to learn from their own mistakes, but that still lends them the protection of our experience as a buffer against unnecessary disasters. There will be times when the consequences we mete out will seem unreasonable to the child. At times like this, we need to examine ourselves to make sure that they are indeed reasonable, and necessary, even if not understood. Anyone who has witnessed a two-year-old running out into traffic, convinced that all cars will stop while s/he retrieves his/her ball, has experienced a moment when preventive discipline was the order of the day, whether the process was able to be mutual or not. There are other dangerous situations that call upon our best skills in attempting to provide preventive discpline: most of us are not willing to allow teenagers to learn from the mistake of cutting their wrists, or taking a dangerous drug. It requires careful thought and lots of discussion between adults, to determine which situations we should step into and which we should allow to play out so that learning can occur from natural consequences. We need also to recognize that there are times when kids are not available for discpline: when they're on drugs or alcohol, when they are blinded by rage, when they are out of touch with reality. Most often, these times will pass and the opportunity for discipline (as contrasted with control) will present itself and we will then buy up these moments after the storm, to try to teach another way of handling stress or peer pressure, remembering that the goal of discipline is self-control, self-discipline. It is when we see a child/teenager learn a better way to handle his/her feelings and impulses that we are paid for our work, not when we pick up our checks.

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