

Positive Punishment?

Am I reading that right? What in the world? Positive and punishment don't go together. Well, when you are raising children, they do. Positive is mathematical when used in conjunction with punishment. If something is positive in math, it is added. Punishment is anything that decreases the behavior. So, we add something to decrease the behavior. Now that makes sense. We do it all of the time. Often, if you do something over and over, it becomes a habit. Most people rarely look at their habits until they find that they aren't working. So, if you find yourself asking about discipline, I can imagine you are struggling with teaching a child something. If you find yourself in a rut with managing your children, it is important to remind yourself of a few things:

1. It is important to discipline in a way that teaches the child responsibility for their behavior. Modeling is one of the most effective ways to teach behavior - so take responsibility for your behavior. For example, if a child says, "you said a bad word." While you might want to say, "go away", you should say, "you are right, I did and I shouldn't have. Thank you for reminding me." After all no one acts right all of the time.
2. Remember to pay attention to positive behaviors. If we give children attention for good things that they do, they will do more good things. All children need attention and often they will act up to get some form of attention because some is better than none.
3. Give children appropriate ways to feel powerful. If you don't help them to feel in control of their life, they will find a way to be in control (drugs, alcohol, pregnancy). You can help a child to feel powerful by asking them for their advice, ask them to help you with chores and give them choices. Sometimes just asking a child "what could you do for me?", will help them to search their skills and offer you a gift. We all like to give something to others.
4. Use action, not words. If you have already made a request and stated the consequence that will follow if not completed - then don't say it again - provide the consequence. If you don't follow through, your child will likely see that you don't mean what you say - so they may not listen.
 - a. Use natural consequences. Ask yourself what would happen if I were not here? That would be the natural consequence. If we interfere when we don't need to we rob our children of the chance to learn from their mistakes. You can also save your relationship because they won't view you as controlling or nagging.
 - b. Use logical consequences. Sometimes the natural consequences would be too far in the future to allow it to play out - so you can use logical consequences. For example, if your child takes something from the store and you find out when you get home (even though it is inconvenient) you should immediately go back to the store and make him/her take responsibility for their behavior and pay for it. The humiliation of having to face the store owner is HUGE! If your child uses your money to pay for it, then you can have him/her do an extra chore around the house to earn the money that his mistake cost.
5. Withdraw from conflict. If your child is throwing a temper tantrum, it is best to leave the room and ask them to let you when they want to "try again." Don't leave in anger or defeat. The less emotion you show, the more they have to assume responsibility for their tantrum. I always like to remind parents that if they yell and scream at their child as a result of a temper tantrum, their behavior often looks worse than the child's behavior.

6. Separate the behavior from the child. You should never tell a child that they are bad. Help your child recognize the behavior that is inappropriate. A child that is told that he is bad will often prove you right.
7. Be kind and firm at the same time. If you make a request, you should be able to leave it to the child to complete (as long as they are capable). For example, if you request that your child be dressed by 7:30 a.m. or he/she will dress in the car or have to go to school as is - then, you have to remain firm to that and take him/her to the car with their bag of clothes. Rarely will you have a child that would rather continue that power struggle and embarrass themselves in front of friends. The next time you make the request, they will be much more likely to take you seriously.
8. Remember your goal. Most of us have the goal of raising good citizens who find happiness and success. So, we must teach them how to accomplish these things throughout their childhood. If we let our child misbehave, never suffer natural consequences, blame others for their shortcomings and never be responsible for their behaviors and emotions - chances are, you will not reach your goal. You will find that you fell short and the child will likely resent you later in life when they are forced to learn and it will happen sooner or later. If a child becomes involved with the law and that is the first natural consequence he/she has ever experienced - imagine the regret that goes along with that. I am sure most of us would rather a child learn in the safety of his/her home and not with complete strangers who often have no concern for emotions.
9. Be consistent and follow through. By the time your child reaches the age of three, they know who they are dealing with. If you are consistent in your response, you will likely not even have to redirect behavior because your child knows what the response will be. Children are often very skilled in manipulating their environment to get their needs met, so we need to be one step ahead of them and help them to meet their needs in positive ways so misbehavior occurs less frequently.
10. Check yourself often. It is important to make sure every now and then you ask yourself, "Am I doing okay? Is there anything I need to brush up on? What can I do differently?"

Good luck and never be afraid to ask for help - it takes a village to raise a child.

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Please use a separate answer sheet for each parent completing this training.

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ License #: _____

Please read the enclosed article and answer the following questions for a half-hour training credit. If more than one person wishes to receive credit, he/she must use a separate piece of paper and have their own signature and legal name on that page. To receive credit, please mail your answers in a timely manner to:

TFI Family Services, Attn: Barb Newman, PO Box 780086, Wichita KS 67278

1. Define positive punishment

2. It is important to discipline in a way that teaches the child _____ for their behavior

3. True or False If we give attention to the child for positive behaviors, the child will do less of them

4. What are two types of consequences?

5. True or False We should engage in conflict with the child to teach them that they are powerless.

6. Most of us have the goal of raising good citizens who find _____ and _____.

7. Children are often very skilled in _____ their environment to get their needs met.

8. True or False Asking for help is a sign of weakness