

C310

# DISCIPLINE— NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

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Sally wanted to teach her six-year-old daughter Tania to be responsible for keeping her room in order. First, she tried punishment; that didn't work. Then, she tried rewarding the child; that worked for awhile. When that failed, she tried bribes.

Sally learned that these methods are generally unsuccessful in teaching responsibility. The punishment, reward and bribe system that Sally tried on Tania, and learned from her own parents and under which most parents of today were raised, is ineffective in developing responsible decision-making adults for these reasons:

- The child does not develop responsibility for self behavior. Instead, the parent is responsible for the child's behavior.
- The child is prevented from learning to make decisions and learning to live and cope with decisions made.
- The child is more likely to resist and become uncontrollable.
- The child demonstrates acceptable behavior only in the presence of authority figures. Leave the child alone, and the behavior quickly returns to non-acceptable behavior.

Like many parents, Sally learned that responsibility cannot be taught, but must be given to the child, allowing the child to learn how to handle it.

Dinkmeyer and McKay, in their book, *Raising a Responsible Child*, give four basic rules for helping a child assume responsibility:

**1. A parent should avoid performing tasks a child can do alone.** When first performing a task, a child will often not meet the adult's standards for one reason or another. Perhaps the child is not old enough and doesn't understand what is expected, or the parent's standards are too high.

It is important to keep in mind, when a child is first learning to assume responsibility, that the end product is not as important as the effort. A child becomes easily discouraged and may refuse to accept responsibility if a parent does not acknowledge and accept those first efforts. A parent should encourage the child to be helpful at every available opportunity. The parent should assist the young child to take responsibility for such tasks as dressing, keeping the child's room orderly and taking care of personal belongings.

**2. A parent should allow time for learning.** Many of a parent's attempts to help a child learn responsibility fail be-

cause enough time isn't allowed for the development of responsibility. Too often a parent will feel rushed, or expect that within two weeks the child should have learned responsibility for keeping the room in order.

A parent who interacts with the child in a relaxed manner, feeling no pressure and showing encouragement and patience, has a good chance for helping the child learn new behaviors and attitudes. Probably a poor time to try to make changes in a child's behavior is when the parent feels definite time limits. For example, attempting to teach a youngster how to put on clothes in the morning when everyone is rushed invites failure. Trying to hurry the child creates frustration and in all probability, the child is eventually dressed by someone else. In the end, the child may become discouraged and may refuse to try again for some time.

**3. A parent should ask, not demand.** Any adult who has experienced having another adult or a child demand that something be done knows such techniques usually decrease the willingness to cooperate. The same is true in parent-child relationships; a demand by a parent will usually decrease the child's desire to help out. If a parent requests a child's cooperation by stressing the parent's need for assistance, and the child has the ability to provide it, the child usually will offer assistance. The child will interpret the request as, "My parent needs my help but isn't interested in me."

If the child refuses, this may be a clue that the relationship is not as it could be. The best reply a parent can give to a refusal is to accept the child's denial and continue working to improve the relationship. When the child does help out, the parent must show appreciation, "Thanks, Sam, you made the job a lot easier for me."

**4. A parent can learn to use natural and logical consequences.** What should a parent do when a child refuses to perform those tasks that are the child's responsibility? A parent should always try to gain the child's voluntary cooperation by encouragement, being cooperative and by using democratic procedures in the home. If these fail, the parent needs to stop talking, withdraw from the conflict and let the child experience the natural or logical consequences of the child's irresponsibility.

The uses of natural and logical consequences are in accord with reality. This method helps to prepare the child for the way in which nature and society are going to react to the child's behavior. As long as the parent continues either to perform the child's task or take the brunt of the child's disap-

pointment, the child will not become responsible. The concept of natural and logical consequences is designed to help children develop responsibility and will be dealt with later in this bulletin.

It is important to remember that as a child learns to accept responsibility, the child begins to enjoy being a responsible person. There will be times when a child may slip back and become irresponsible, but these are times when a parent can remind the child of success in previously performed tasks.

## The Importance of Order

Most people agree that observing rules or order holds top priority in society. Without order, chaos and eventual destruction of society would occur. The same holds true in parenting or family relationships. Each parent has an obligation to help children understand and observe the order of the family and of the society of which they are a part.

Over the years, many of the child-raising philosophies have not supported this idea. For example, the permissive and autocratic methods of child rearing created children who have had difficulty in accepting order, had little respect for authority and are basically concerned only with their own needs and rights. In the end, these children have experienced the inconvenience of disorder later in life when Mom and Dad were not there to help them realize that order is both beneficial and necessary for life. To teach a child respect for order, we should consider child rearing through democratic procedures. Natural and logical consequences are tools for a parent to use in teaching respect and resolving conflicts.

## Natural Consequences

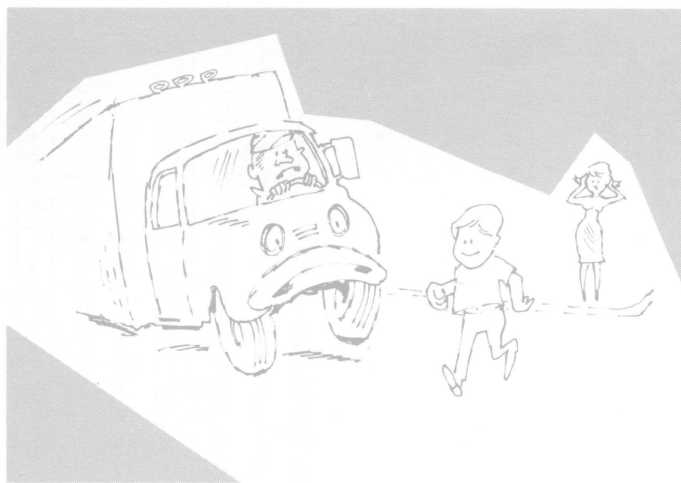
Natural Consequences can best be explained by one mother's statement: "When a child does something wrong, you don't hit or scold the child, you do nothing. You let the situation get worse and worse until the child becomes uncomfortable or sees that the situation has become ridiculous. Finally, the child will make changes without someone else insisting."

Natural consequences, such as the discomfort of going without dinner, provide a method for the parent to allow the child to learn the natural order of events. The parent who uses natural consequences does not threaten, argue with or concede to the child. Rather, the parent allows the child to discover, without outside insistence, the advantages of respect for order. The child who experiences consequences develops self-discipline and internal motivation. This child learns to respect order not because of the fear of punishment, but because the child has learned that order is necessary for effective living. (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964).

In using natural consequences, a parent will soon discover that nature is a good friend. For example, a child who doesn't eat gets hungry; one who cheats at games soon is without friends; one who forgets to do homework finds that the teacher will demand a reason.

When using natural consequences, a parent must not allow serious harm to come to the child. For example, a child should not be permitted to experience walking in front of a truck or eating poisonous food. A parent must use common sense when allowing natural consequences to help the child learn.

In order for natural consequences to work, parents have the obligation to inform the child *once* of the natural consequences of any specific behavior. Continuous reminders to



the child give the child unwarranted help of punishment by nagging. A parent should only interfere in extreme emergencies.

## Logical Consequences

There are many child-rearing experiences not covered by natural consequences. Often a parent must be prepared to do something else because of the danger or harmfulness of the natural experience to the child. In such instances, the parent will need to employ logical consequences. Logical consequences are more effective than punishment and at the same time have none of the drawbacks of punishment.

First, logical consequences must be distinguished from punishment. Logical consequences are arranged by an adult but must be experienced by the child as logical in nature. What happens must be a logical consequence of the child's conduct. In other words, the consequences must *fit* the behavior in a logical way. Logical consequences differ from punishment in several ways (Dreikurs and Gray, 1970):

1. Logical consequences express the reality of the social order. Logical consequences acknowledge mutual rights and mutual respect.

**Mother:** (Stereo is blaring) Susie, I realize you and Sally enjoy your records, but your Dad and I are trying to talk. So please either turn the stereo down or go outside. You decide which you'd rather do.

In contrast, punishment expresses the power of personal authority.

**Mother:** Susie, turn off that stereo right now. I'm trying to talk to your father.

2. Logical consequences are rational and related to the misbehavior or situation.

**Father:** John, I'm going to mow the lawn this morning, but I won't be able to mow until all your toys are picked up. Please pick them up. If you don't, I'll place them in a bag and put them away.

In contrast, punishment is rarely related to the logic of the misbehavior or situation.

**Father:** (Angrily) John! I've told you a dozen times to pick up your toys outside. I'm going to mow over them, and you can just forget about going to the show this afternoon.

3. Logical consequences are non-judgmental and imply no element of personal moral judgment.

**Son:** Dad, remember when I borrowed your pen without asking?

**Father:** Yes, I do!

**Son:** Well I lost it — I've looked everywhere for it.

**Father:** Well, Son, how will you replace the pen?

In this situation Dad handled the situation by focusing on the impersonal fact that a pen was lost and must be replaced. In contrast, punishment is personalized and implies right and wrong.

**Father:** (Very angry) Son, you took my pen without permission! Don't you know enough to ask? That's just outright stealing and stealing is wrong. Since you've lost it, I'll take it out of your allowance.

4. Logical consequences are related to behavior that happens now and in the future.

The Smith family recently purchased a dog, and young Bill made an agreement to feed the dog, but did not live up to his agreement. Bill is now playing with the dog.

**Father:** I'm sorry, Bill, but you're not ready for the responsibility of caring for a dog. You will just have to leave the dog alone for two days, then you can resume your responsibility again.

In contrast, punishment relates to past behavior.

**Father:** (Angrily) Bill, you forgot to feed the dog. You don't care a bit what happens to that dog. It's just like you to forget. You can't play with the dog anymore.

5. Logical consequences are done with a pleasant friendly parental voice. A parent is both *firm* and *kind* when invoking logical consequences. It provides for pleasant verbal discussion. Jim and Billy are disturbing the breakfast meal by kicking each other under the table.

**Mother:** Jim and Billy, you may either settle down and finish your breakfast or leave the table until you're ready to join us!

In contrast, punishment is a put-down, threatening the "offender" with disrespect.

**Mother:** (Angrily) You two knock it off right now or you'll go to school without any breakfast.

6. Logical consequences permit a choice for the child. Jane has just come home from school and wants to play outside.

**Mother:** Jane, if you plan to go outside, you'll need to change into your play clothes.

In contrast, punishment demands obedience.

**Mother:** Jane, change your clothes.

A parent should keep in mind there is a thin line between logical consequences and punishment. The *tone of voice*, *friendly attitude* and *willingness to accept* the child's decision are essential characteristics of logical consequences. In addition, no matter how logical an action may seem to you, if your tone of voice is harsh, your attitude overbearing, your words threatening, the message conveyed to the child will be one of punishment.

A child has a way of sensing the hidden message that a crime has been committed and there is need for punishment. This punitive attitude interferes with the benefit the child will receive from experiencing the logical consequences of making decisions. The purpose of natural and logical consequences is to encourage the child to make responsible decisions, not to force the child into submission.

## Three Techniques for Logical Consequences

**Technique 1—Ignoring or Withdrawing.** At some point in time a parent may be arguing with the child in hopes of persuading the child to stop unwanted behavior. However, the parent would be better off ignoring or leaving the child rather than to continue talking.

The following example shows how a parent used this technique. Dad was reading a magazine. Joey decided he wanted Dad to play with him. So he asked, and Dad said,



"I'm tired, maybe after awhile." Joey kept begging and whining for Dad to play. Dad simply picked up his magazine and left the room. He withdrew from Joey's behavior.

Some parents equate such withdrawal with defeat or running away from the child and the situation. This is not so. Withdrawal as used here, simply means leaving the situation where there is trouble and going to a place where there is no trouble. The message sent by the parent is, "When I don't approve of what you are doing, I leave." When a parent uses withdrawal as a guidance technique, the parent should not have a sense of fleeing from the child, but rather from the child's behavior.

Withdrawing from the child's behavior can be effective in discouraging annoying behavior or misbehavior no matter what goal the child is trying to achieve. For example, if the child is acting silly to get attention, trying to show power by arguing, throwing a temper tantrum or demonstrating inadequacy to get the parent to do something for the child, usually the parent needs only to ignore or withdraw from the child.

Why is withdrawal or ignoring so effective? First, the parent must keep in mind that a child's behavior is purposive. For example, if the child wants to get the parent involved against the parent's will, and the parent resorts to punishment, the parent has become involved. On the other hand, if the parent disappears, the parent does not become involved; consequently, the child's attempt to force the child's goal-oriented behavior on the parent fails.

**Technique 2—The Bathroom.** One of Dreikur's favorite techniques for logical consequences is for the parent to use the bathroom as a place to withdraw from the child's misbehavior. The bathroom was suggested because it is usually the one room in any household where a person can close the door and lock oneself in while concentrating on composing oneself. The parent who uses this technique reads a good book, listens to a radio or takes a bath. When both the parent and child are calm, the parent walks out and relates to the child in a pleasant manner. If the child exhibits further undesirable behavior, the parent returns to the bathroom.

The bathroom technique may present a problem to some parents if there is only one bathroom in the house. The child may suddenly scream, "I have to go wee-wee!" The parent should remain in the bathroom. The bathroom is occupied for two very specific purposes: 1) to help the parent regain composure; and 2) for child discipline. The message being sent by the parent in the bathroom is, "I will no longer take any nonsense from you!"

Some parents will ask, "What if the child begins to beat on the door with a hammer, break furniture or do other things that might cause harm to either the child or the house?" The parent should still stay in the bathroom. This one event may change the child's perception of the parent. If the parent leaves the bathroom when the child threatens, the parent loses a very effective child training technique. Once in the bathroom, the parent should stay until both parent and child have calmed down, leaving only when the parent is ready, rather than when the child wants the parent to come out. The parent can say, while in the bathroom, "My child is being taught to improve behavior and accept responsibility for personal actions."

**Technique 3—Waking the Child.** The waking technique is based on the premise that the child has promised to do an agreed-upon task and the parent has promised not to nag about it. However, the child has agreed that the parent can remind the child at any time, day or night, if the child forgets to do the agreed-upon task. To prevent this from being punishment, the child must *freely* agree to being reminded by the parent at any time, day or night.

A good example is an experience in the Smith family. Dad and Jon had agreed that one of Jon's chores was to take out the garbage. Garbage was to be taken out before Jon went to bed at night, since Mother didn't want it in the house. Jon agreed, but kept forgetting. Dad was getting tired of continually reminding him, and besides, Dad sometimes forgot to remind Jon.

One night, just before Dad was going to bed, he remembered that Jon and he had agreed that Jon could be reminded at any time to perform the task. Dad went into Jon's room, awakened him, and informed him about the garbage. Jon got up grudgingly and carried out the garbage. Jon never forgot again; it was firmly fixed in his memory.

This technique must be used consistently. For example, if the child must be awakened and falls back to sleep without doing the task, the child must be awakened again, and gently but firmly informed of the responsibility. Usually, a re-awakening by knocking on the child's door or gently asking every 15 minutes will get a positive response from the child.

Some of the methods or techniques suggested for use by a parent may seem harsh, but in the end these techniques help develop responsible and self-respecting individuals. Most misbehavior by a child can be handled best by natural and logical consequences.

The purpose for having the child experience natural consequences and designing logical consequences is to allow the

child to make responsible decisions, not to force the child into submission. By using this style of discipline, the child is able to make decisions and then be accountable for the decision, whether it turns out to be right or wrong.

## References

1. Dinkmeyer, Don and Gary D. McKay, *Raising A Responsible Child*. New York; Simon & Schuster, 1973.
2. Dreikurs, Rudolf, Shirley Gould and Raymond J. Corsini. *Family Council*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1974.
3. Dreikurs, Rudolf, and Loren Grey. *A Parent's Guide to Child Discipline*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1970.
4. Dreikurs, Rudolf and Vicki Soltz. *Children: The Challenge*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964.
5. Pitzer, Ron, *For Parents of Young Children — Setting the Stage for Discipline*. Extension Bulletin 321-6, Minnesota Cooperative Extension, 1970.



## To Think About and To Talk About— For Discussion

1. What are four basic rules for helping a child assume responsibility?
2. Why are natural and logical consequences stressed as an alternative to punishment and reward?
3. What is the primary difference between logical consequences and natural consequences?
4. How can logical consequences be turned into punishment?
5. For logical consequences to be effective, what should a parent do?
6. Why is it important to understand the concept of order in parenting?
7. Why is withdrawing by a parent from a child's misbehavior considered to be equated with defeat or running away from a situation? Should it be?
8. Why is it important for a parent to remember "talk less, act more"?
9. Why is it important to let the child share in the responsibility of the consequence?
10. What are three logical consequences that a parent might use in disciplining the child? How would you use them?





*PEP Points to Ponder*

**USING NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES  
AS A FORM OF DISCIPLINE**

1. Natural and Logical consequences provide an opportunity for the child to make decisions and be responsible for behavior.
2. The child should be allowed to actually perform tasks.
3. Parent involvement in the child's experiences should be minimal.
4. The parent should allow time for the child to learn responsibility.
5. The parent should respect the child's right and view the child as a capable human being.
6. Natural consequences are those experiences that permit the child to learn from the natural order of the physical world.
7. Logical consequences are those experiences that permit the child to learn from the social order of a given society.
8. A parent should be both firm and kind when using natural and logical consequences.
9. There are certain steps for a parent to consider when applying logical consequences:
  - a) Provide choices and be willing to accept a child's decision.
  - b) Be friendly and communicate this friendliness in your voice when applying logical consequences.
  - c) Assure the child of additional chances to try again.
  - d) If the misbehavior re-occurs, extend the time limit between when a child is experiencing a logical consequence of the act and when the child tries again.
10. Parents must be patient and willing to listen, encouraging and, most of all, be committed to the idea; it will take time for natural and logical consequences to be effective.

## Exercise

Following are three typical parent-child situations. In each situation:

1. Describe if a logical or natural consequence should be used.
2. Identify the consequence you select as either natural or logical.
3. Determine how you would administer the consequence.
4. Determine how you would act or what you would say after the child decided on some action.

**IMPORTANT:** In each situation look for a natural consequence first and if one isn't present, design a logical consequence.

### Parent-Child Situation I

Sally, 11, and Fran, 9, are continuously arguing. More often than not these arguments develop into fights, and mother or father usually have to interfere or Fran, the youngest, will come running to one of them. Both parents have tried everything from spanking, to punishing both for fighting, to withdrawing all privileges. Nothing seems to work. What can they do?

### Parent-Child Situation II

In the past few weeks at bedtime, Timmy, 3½, has been getting his parents' attention by asking for a drink of water, or to go to the bathroom. What can Timmy's parents do?

### Parent-Child Situation III

Janet, 10, has been a good student in school. Lately her grades have been falling, especially in math. She seems to get along well at home, but at school there is a particular person she is having trouble with — a girl friend who has become in Janet's terms, the "teacher's pet." She reports that this girl can do anything she wants and that Mrs. Brown, the teacher, only notices Janet because she is failing math. What should her parents do?

### At-Home Activity

After you have read Bulletin 632-7, "Discipline — Natural and Logical Consequences" practice applying natural or logical consequences to one of your parent-child relationship concerns. Think about the techniques you will apply. Try to choose a situation where you will experience success.

## MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES AND PUNISHMENT

### NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

#### Major Characteristics

1. Expresses reality of natural order.
2. Naturally relates to the misbehavior or unpleasant event.
3. Treats child with respect and dignity.
4. Is concerned with present and future behavior.
5. Tone of voice is calm, rational, and communicates respect.
6. Allows choice.

#### Parent's Message to Child

- I trust you to learn from your misbehavior.
- I trust you to make responsible decision.
- You are a person of worth.
- You are a person who can take care of yourself.
- I love you, but I don't approve of your behavior.
- I have faith in you, you are a capable person when it comes to choice.

#### Probable Reaction in Child

- Cooperation. Respect of self and others. Self-discipline.
- Learn from experience.
- Separates behavior and self worth, feels good about self—redirects misbehavior to acceptable behavior.
- Becomes self directing, a person who can make self-decisions.
- Accepts and feels sure of parent's love.
- Becomes a responsible decision-making person. Has increased resourcefulness.

### LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

#### Major Characteristics

1. Expresses reality of social order.
2. Logically relates to the misbehavior.
3. Treats child with dignity and respect, allows for separation of behavior from person's self worth.
4. Shows concern with present and future.
5. Has both verbal and nonverbal communication that conveys respect.
6. Allows choice.

#### Parent's Message to Child

- I trust you and will stand by you in your decision as you learn to respect the rights of others.
- I trust you to make a sensible and responsible decision.
- You are a person of worth.
- You are a capable person worthy of taking care of yourself.
- I accept you for what you are. While I don't accept your behavior, I do accept you as a person of worth.
- You are capable of making your own decision.

#### Probable Reaction in Child

- Learn respect for self and others—cooperation, reliability, and self discipline.
- Learning by doing.
- Redirects misbehavior into acceptable behavior, but feels good about self.
- Becomes self-directing, capable of evaluating.
- Accepts and feels sure of parents' love.
- Becomes a responsible decision-making person. Increases resourcefulness.

### PUNISHMENT

#### Major Characteristics

1. Expresses power of personal authority.
2. Rarely related to act, often illogically conceived. Spur of the moment.
3. Implies only a right and wrong way.
4. Relates to the past behavior of the child.
5. Verbal and nonverbal communication is full of threats, disrespect, loss of love.
6. Allows little self direction.

#### Parent's Message to Child

- Do what I tell you because I tell you to do it.
- I'll show you who is boss. You deserve what you're getting and maybe even worse.
- You're bad, wicked, evil, not acceptable to me.
- You can never be counted on. You'll never learn. You're unreliable.
- Shape up or ship out. A child of mine would never do a thing like that.
- Your ideas don't count. You're untrustworthy.

#### Probable Reaction in Child

- Rebellion, desire to strike back, lack of self discipline, apathetic.
- Resentment, desire to strike back. Fear of parent, confusion.
- Hurt feelings, guilt, and a desire to get even at all cost.
- Low self-concept, feels unacceptability. Unable to make a decision.
- Rebellion, fear, guilt, desire to strike back and get even.
- Defiant compliance feelings, person rebels.

# MY BLUEPRINT FOR IMPROVING MY PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

1. In my parent-child relationship, I am specifically concerned that:

2. My usual response to this specific parent-child relationship concern includes one or more of the following:

(Place a check mark beside the concern(s) you consider most unacceptable.)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking, Lecturing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting Angry                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatening, Yelling<br>Warning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staring, Nagging        | <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Criticizing                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving Orders, Commands | <input type="checkbox"/> Punishing, Removing<br>Privileges, Shaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                     |

3. I believe that, during the past week, in my own parent-child relationship I:

	More	Less	About the Same		More	Less	About the Same
Acted More Calmly				Used Natural and Logical Consequences			
Acted Instead of Reacted				Stimulated Independence			
Listened				Used Rational Thinking			
Acted Firmly and Kindly				Stimulated Responsible Decision Making			
Encouraged Rather than Discouraged				Enjoyed My Parent-Child Relationship			
Communicated Love and Mutual Respect				Took Time For Myself			
Withdrew From Conflict That Didn't Involve Me							

4. The Atmosphere in our family has changed to one of:

	More	Less	About the Same		More	Less	About the Same
Friendliness				Self-Discipline			
Cooperation				Planning and Working Together			
Mutual Respect				Fun With Family Members			
Understanding				Distrust			
Tension and Strife				Confusion			
Involvement							

5. This week I learned:

6. I plan to change my parent-child behavior by: