

APPLYING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN PARENTING

Abstract. The family environment greatly affects children's development. It, especially parenting styles, can facilitate or make it difficult for children's personality development. In Vietnam, positive discipline has not been widely adopted in families for many reasons. Meanwhile, many families have still used negative discipline, consequently, adversely affecting children's growth and well-being. Thus, positive discipline and how to take it in families were introduced in this article to help parents easily apply them in their parenting.

Keywords: discipline, positive discipline, negative discipline, education, parenting, natural consequences, logical consequences, limit setting, time-out.

Introduction

In parenting, if parents have ever felt uncomfortable and improper using corporal punishment, then positive discipline may be the optimal alternative. Positive discipline can be combined/replaced with conventional parenting methods to change and correct children's misbehaviors with more positive methods, both mentally and physically. It is considered one of the effective, civilized ways to have a balance between love and strictness when teaching children about life lessons.

It is supported by experts that positive discipline for misbehaving children can bring certain benefits to both parents and children, especially the high possibility to strengthen the bond between parents and children with mutual respect. This method also helps effectively reduce conflicts between parents and children, and teaches children that they can cope with difficult times without scolding, intimidation or corporal punishment. Although positive discipline can cause children to face some punishment from their parents, it allows parents to prevent their children's misbehaviors.

Literature review of positive discipline in parenting

Professor Cluver said, "As parents, we do not want to scold or beat our children. We do it because

we are too stressed to find any other way", "Like a drug that does not work and affects your health, when we find one useless, it is a good reason to look for a new approach."

When a child has been committing or is about to commit a misbehavior, it is required that educators impose disciplinary measures. Hence, discipline is a common measure taken by educators to change children's misbehaviors. Yet, discipline exists in two forms: positive discipline and negative discipline.

Positive discipline is in favor of the best interests of children. It does not involve damaging their physical and mental health but includes an agreement between adults and children, consistent with the latter's psychophysiological characteristics. In other words, positive discipline makes use of natural and logical consequences to establish rules and disciplines in families and schools as well as a time-out to help children abandon their misbehaviors.

In contrast, negative discipline uses corporal punishment (such as hitting, slapping ears, slapping butt, etc.) and mental punishment (swearing, insulting, etc.) for children to get rid of their misbehaviors.

In Vietnam, negative discipline appears commonly in families with the following main forms: swearing or scolding; addressing children with abusive language; keeping them alone in a locked room;

punishing them to stand in the sun; tying them up; or hitting (with a tool or hand, etc.)

In recent years, there has been an increasing public concern about repeated cases of domestic violence against children with serious consequences. Physical and mental punishment may result in many consequences. Specifically, parents' disciplinary measures may:

- Negatively affect the parent-child relationship. Children will feel confused and anxious. For everyone, parents are always the most special people. Giving birth and bringing up children, parents always give them the best things and unconditional love and are willing to sacrifice everything for them. However, suffering parents' negative discipline, children will become anxious and confused with negative thoughts like: "Are my parents not loving me anymore?", "Am I the biological child of my parents?" or have negative feelings or behaviors such as anxiety, fear, leaving home, and committing suicide;

- Affect children's physical and mental health. Living in anxiety and fear for a long time may cause some children to face psychological diseases such as anxiety illness and depression. Some children suffer long-term physical effects or even are killed by their parents' brutal beating;

- Make children angry and want to take revenge. When severely beaten or scolded, children will become stubborn, feel humiliated, and want to take revenge to satisfy their anger. It can be the cause of other misbehaviors of children to a greater extent than the initial one;

- Make children feel worthless. When a child is scolded or criticized or beaten a lot, he will feel that he cannot do anything good or nice, no matter how hard he has tried. Consequently, he will lose confidence in himself, and feel inferior, leading to a lack of confidence;

- Lead to children's dishonest behaviors such as lying and cheating. Children are subject to severe physical and mental punishment for every mistake, whether intentionally or unintentionally. There-

fore, when making mistakes, they tend to blame others to avoid responsibility or try to get good results, at all costs and in all ways, including wrong and unethical manner, harming others, so as not to be punished;

- Make children no longer afraid of negative discipline. Human emotions and feelings are adaptive. Children are so accustomed to repeated negative discipline that they no longer feel shame, humiliation or pain. Thus, there is no motivation to change their misbehaviors;

- Create children's thinking that violence is a way to solve every problem as they learned from their parents. When children do wrong or have undesired behaviors, parents scold or beat them. Hence, when children participate in activities in other environments or other social relationships, they can also apply these measures to people around them. These measures will likely be applied by children to their old parents or their future children. As a consequence, violence will become pervasive in society.

Given the enormous consequences of negative discipline, it is time for parents to change their minds about the use of discipline in parenting. The prevalence of negative discipline is partly because of the old-fashioned Vietnamese educational view that "Spare the rod, spoil the child". In addition, there are many other reasons such as misperception about the immediate effect of negative discipline on changing a child's behavior, lack of understanding of children's psychophysiological characteristics, and no access to positive discipline.

Five principles of positive discipline to be kept in mind by parents

- Positive discipline is a method of balancing kindness, affection and strictness.

- Positive discipline helps children feel close and meaningful to their parents.

- Positive discipline has a long-lasting effect.

- Positive discipline provides children with social and life skills to be good people.

– Positive discipline enables children to discover their hidden potential and positively use their energy.

Content of and how to take positive discipline in parenting

1. Consequence measure

Content of the measure

Through this measure, children can figure out that every behavior has certain consequences. The application of this measure serves two main purposes: teach children to be responsible for their own behaviors while encouraging them to make responsible decisions (going to school, going to bed on time, doing homework, etc.) and use it as an alternative to punishment, allowing children to learn good manners in a scolding-free way. Moreover, this measure promotes a warm parent-child relationship, with fewer conflicts.

There are two types of consequences: natural consequences and logical consequences. Natural consequences are those that occur naturally, without adult intervention. Meanwhile, logical consequences require the intervention of adults or other subjects. For instance, if a child does not study, he will get a bad grade, or if he break a toy, he will not get a new one for a certain time.

1.2. How to take the measure

When taking this measure, parents should keep in mind that:

Parents should allow children to experience behaviors without danger to themselves and those around them and draw lessons for themselves. For example, children will understand that if they do not eat, they will be hungry; if they do not treat others well, they will have to play alone; making unthorough decisions may lead to failure, etc. Parents should consider using either a natural consequence or logical consequence measure on a case-by-case basis. If these experiences are positive, children are more likely to repeat the behavior. Contrarily, children will limit it if the experience is negative.

Concerning behaviors that may be dangerous to children and those around them, parents need to

provide children with persuasive explanations such as reasons for not performing a behavior, its possible consequences and other good alternative ways to do it.

It is recommended to let children's mistakes go and take them as lessons because to err is human. If parents are tolerant and cleverly apply the logical consequence measure, children will feel understood and sympathized with, subsequently, recognizing and correcting their mistakes.

Parents should accept children's imperfect first time doing something and patiently guide them so that they can do it better next time. Children will see it as encouragement, not disparagement or derision. If parents refuse to allow children to do things on their own, they will gradually get used to being dependent, passive, and lazy. As an example, a child may not have a clean bath the first time; however, instead of helping him bathe the next time, parents should persistently guide the child to do it better next time.

The prerequisite for using this measure is a foundation of mutual respect, cooperation and encouragement in the parent-child relationship. To change a child's behavior, parents should first get him to cooperate with them instead of confronting them. To obtain the child's cooperation, parents also have to be cooperative. To be respected by the child, parents must show respect for him.

2. Limit Setting Measure

2.1. Content of the measure

The limit setting involves establishing rules, regulations and discipline to educate, nurture and ensure the healthy and safe development of children. It helps children identify which behavior is appropriate or inappropriate and have a habit of maintaining order in the family, classroom and society.

2.2. How to take the measure

It is worth noting for parents in applying this measure that:

The limit setting requires the engagement of all members. Limits can be set at 3 levels: Permitted behaviors (without prior notice); Permitted behaviors (with prior notice); and Unpermitted behaviors.

Limits should be established for stable, repetitive and domestic activities and behaviors such as eating, playing, resting, studying, and working. Attention should be paid to the difference in age and nature of work as well as other factors of all family members and the participation of all family members. Explanations (e.g., reasons for no smoking or permission before leaving home) are recommended to be provided in advance for unpermitted activities or those requiring the consent of adults.

Limits should be set before embarking on every new duty with children's clear understanding of the limits and the consequences of breaking them. This will help children capture the limits of their behaviors and commit no negative attitudes such as tantrums or stubbornness.

There should be a commitment to adherence to limits by all family members, in which parents are the role models for children to follow. For more effectiveness of the commitment, such limits can be made in writing and signed or left their own signs thereon by the members. The commitment will be carefully in a conspicuous position to highlight members' responsibility for the limits they have committed.

Limits should be set in a flexible manner. For instance, a child may stay up later than usual on his birthday. However, consideration should be taken in each situation so as not to easily compromise with the child, devaluing the limits and consequently making the child frequently disregard the limits.

When children go beyond the committed limits, parents need to calmly follow the accompanying instructions and avoid anger and mental and physical insults towards children. Take an example, a child is not allowed to use the phone for the next 2 days if he has used it for more than 2 hours as committed. Parents should not scold or beat him, just repeat the commitment for him to follow.

3. Time-out measure

3.1. Content

Children are often in a bad mood when they are about to perform or are engaged in misbehaviors.

Thus, such measures as advice or punishment do not work in this case. Children will feel that their parents do not understand them as well as the problems they are facing and the reasons why they do so. Even to a more complicated extent, children will feel unjust, unfair, and unloved. Therefore, children must be allowed to balance their emotions, and easily get and accept the influences of their parents. During such time, children also have the opportunity to review and evaluate their own behaviors, enabling parental interventions to be more effective later.

To sum up, a time-out is a period to isolate a child who is or is at risk of engaging in undesirable behaviors (fighting with his friends or destroying his own toys, etc.) from his current activity. During the time-out, the child must sit in one place without participating in the same activities as others.

3.2. How to take the measure

In taking this measure, parents should:

Choose the right space and time. Regarding the space, for no punitive nature, children need to be left in a space where they feel safe. Dark, noisy spaces or places with many factors that cause confusion and fear for children should be avoided. In terms of the time, the measure should not last more than 15 minutes and 5 minutes for those under 6 years old. Otherwise, the measure will not work because children's attention will be transferred to another activity.

Determine goals for children during the time-out period so that they can properly orient their actions and thoughts, avoiding distractions from other unrelated activities.

After the time-out period, parents are suggested to patiently listen to their children to catch on to their thoughts and feelings, as well as the causes of misbehaviors and their aspirations for addressing the consequences of their misbehaviors. Parents should gently and cleverly point out mistakes and limitations in their children's current or potential behaviors and then work with children to seek ways to correct and overcome them.

3. Conclusions

The use of negative discipline measures in parenting causes numerous consequences, including, among others, hindering and making it difficult for children's development. Therefore, parents should be equipped with knowledge about the psychophysi-

ological characteristics of their children's age, give up outdated educational views and methods that hurt children's physical and mental health, and have access to, capture and know how to apply positive discipline measures in parenting for the best development of their children.

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