The Difference Between Discipline and Punishment

By Maren Schmidt

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"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

"What is the difference between disciplining a child and punishing a child?" Jeff, father to a two-year-old, wrote in his e-mail. "I don't see any difference. Isn't it the same thing?"

There is a difference, as I explained to Jeff. My e-mail follows:

Jeff, let's look at the definition of these two words from the American Heritage Dictionary.

Punishment: to subject someone to a penalty for a crime, fault or misbehavior. From the Latin poenire and the Greek poine; poena is money paid as a fine.

Discipline: training that is expected to produce specific character or patterns of behavior especially training that produces moral or mental improvement. From the Latin: discere, to learn.

Discipline is also listed as a synonym under punishment, stressing that with this meaning punishment as a method of training is designed to control an offender and to eliminate or reform unacceptable conduct.

In its essence, punishment is a penalty, paid with money or poena. The connotation is that the person being punished has funds along with knowledge of right and wrong. Does a child fit in that definition?

Discipline with its meaning rooted in learning, has a different significance altogether. Disciples follow their teacher. People, who follow a leader, choose to follow.

The misuse of words can cloud our thinking and dilute meanings so that concepts, such as punishment and discipline, appear to be interchangeable, when in fact they are not.

With a clear understanding of these two ideas, we can ask ourselves, do we want to punish or penalize our children to teach them, or do we want to teach by walking a path that our children can follow, a path down which they can lead others?

Years ago when these two terms were clarified in my mind, I realized punishment was not going to accomplish the teaching I wanted to share with my children. Punishment was not going to promote the learning or self-discipline I hoped to instill.

The question to myself became: How can I best teach my children with this pure idea of discipline? What direction do I want to lead, because it is one that my children will follow? The question was not, "How can I best punish my child?"

To me, Jeff, that is the difference.

There is a place for punishment in our society. It is for those who willingly break established rules or laws. Punishment is for those who willfully endanger others and or their property. It is for those who have attained full rights as citizens. It is for those who are expected to have understanding of societal expectations and consequences. Punishment is designed for those who have resources to pay the penalty or poena. This is what reaching a majority age means. Children are not of majority age. Children are minors.

With minors, we are in the process of teaching these children the path they should follow. Our challenge is to lead the whole person—body, mind, heart and spirit. Our challenge is that we must model the self-discipline, the vision, the passion and the conscience that is at the heart of true learning and self-discovery for our children.

When we discipline our children, we walk a path with them of trust, helping them to understand how to live their lives, how to develop their talents, how to share their love and how to do what's right. Corrections on our path should strive to be of loving intention to serve the needs of the child.

Jeff, I hope I've been able to explain the difference between punishment and discipline, so that you can choose the way you want to lead.

The Understanding Montessori Newsletter is written by Maren Schmidt and is part of her award winning Kids Talk weekly syndicated newspaper column. Visit http://www.kidstalknews.com/ to sign up for her newsletter.

Don't miss the last page of this newsletter to read 20 Alternatives to Punishment by Dr. Aletha Solter!
CORRECTION

Sounds of the Season, the Bridges Holiday Concert is on
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2010
at 4:30 pm
Scottish Rite Masonic Temple
3900 N. Charles Street
Students should come to the lower level by 3:30 pm

(Apologies for the error in the last newsletter)

Save the Date…

…for an evening with acclaimed pediatric neuropsychologist and Montessori parent

Dr. Steven Hughes,
January 20th, 2011

Dr. Hughes’s research interests include measurement of attention and executive functioning in children and adults, the effects of living in poverty on child development, and the neuro-developmental benefits of classical Montessori education.

www.goodatdoingthings.com

From our volunteer parent for Box Tops for Education Jessica Williams…

Thank you to everyone who has been supporting Box Tops for Education. For our first submission we collected more than 850 Box Tops!!! Keep up the great work, and remember to bring your Box Tops to the office. Also, parents, if you haven’t signed up to support our school and receive information on Box Tops for Education, log on to www.btfe.com. If you have additional questions feel free to contact Jessica Williams at jessica52675@gmail.com.

Reminders from the office:

* Please stop in to check out the Lost and Found for items your child may have left at school. Please remember to label your child’s clothing to make it easier for it to find its way back to you!

* Make-up date for individual school photos: Wednesday, December 8th. Photos will be back to you before the Winter Holiday Break. FORMS NOW AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE!

*Parents of children going to before care please remember while dropping off children in the morning, do not park in assigned numbered spots they are for staff and need to be available as they are arriving to work. Also please remember to sign your child in.
From the Classrooms...

From the White Oaks classroom . . .

We are grateful to Naseem's family for donating their Eastern Box Turtle to our classroom. Aisha has drawn this picture to show how much we love our one and only cold-blooded White Oak!

This week Food For Life students studied grains of the world and then made their own pretzels from scratch! They ground their own flour, followed a recipe, measured out ingredients, and kneaded their own dough. And boy, were they yummy!

Announcing the BMPCS Winter Clothing Drive!

1) Who are we and why are we doing it?

We are the Upper El Community Service enrichment group, and we are doing this drive to provide warm clothing for the homeless in our community.

2) What are we looking to collect?

Winter garments in decent condition (the stuff does NOT need to be brand new)-things like sweaters, hats, gloves, coats, pants, scarves, long johns, blankets.

3) How long will the winter drive last?

This first part of the drive will be done on Dec 23rd, the last day of school before winter break.

4) How can I help if I don't have anything to donate?

Spread the word to friends & family!

5) Where do I bring the clothing I plan to donate?

Put them in any of the big paper bags marked “WCD” located all around the school at the ends of the hallways.

6) When can I start bringing things in?

Tomorrow!

In advance, the Upper El community service enrichment class thanks you for your time and help in keeping the homeless warm in Baltimore this winter!
This week the **Blue Crabs** held a community meeting to discuss how we could make our classroom more friendly, kind and safe. This is what we decided:

1. Always help each other.
2. Be respectful and calm with our bodies.
3. Let small things go.
4. When someone is having a rough time, we could ask them to stop in 3 kind ways. If that doesn't work, we can let them sit in the observation chair until they feel better.
5. When you're upset, always talk about it and make it better. It's nice to end with a hug or a handshake.

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*The first essential for the child’s development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy.*

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Dr. Maria Montessori
From Ms Sue: Extended Day is always in need of donations of craft supplies (paper, beads, yarn, pipe cleaners, etc.), school appropriate games, toys or puzzles and food items for snack (pretzels, popped popcorn, dried fruit, granola, crackers, cheese).

If your child participates in the After-school Sports program, please try to send an extra snack with them to school on the days they attend. Granola bars, apples or bananas with peanut butter, or cheese and crackers would be great snacks to help them fuel up for Sports and stay energized.

Key to the Maryland State Symbols at Baltimore Montessori

Children’s House
ORIOLES – Ms. Kate
BLACK-EYED SUSANS – Ms. Karen
DIAMONDBACK TERRAPINS – Ms. Leanne

Lower Elementary
ECPHORAS – Ms. Betsy
CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVERS – Ms. Jennifer
PATUXENT RIVERSTONES – Ms. Carrie
BLUE CRABS – Ms. Brenna

Upper Elementary
SKIPJACKS – Ms. Christina
ROCKFISH – Ms. Kelly
CHECKERSPOTS – Ms. Debika
WHITE OAKS – Mr. David

From Ms Kitt, a wishlist for the Art Room: In the upcoming weeks the art students will be exploring construction. We will be in need of all your recycled goods: cardboard food boxes, plastic containers, egg cartons, etc. Thank you for your continuous donations!
TWENTY ALTERNATIVES TO PUNISHMENT
by Aletha Solter, Ph.D.

1. **LOOK FOR UNDERLYING NEEDS.** Ex: Give your child something to play with while waiting in line.

2. **GIVE INFORMATION AND REASONS.** Ex: If your child colors on the wall, explain why we color on paper only.

3. **LOOK FOR UNDERLYING FEELINGS.** Acknowledge, accept, and listen to feelings. Ex: If your child hits his baby sister, encourage him to express his anger and jealousy in harmless ways. He may need to cry or rage.

4. **CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT.** This is sometimes easier than trying to change the child. Ex: If your child repeatedly takes things out of the kitchen cupboards, put a childproof lock on them.

5. **FIND ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES.** Redirect your child's behavior. Ex: If you do not want your child to build a fort in the dining room, don't just say no. Tell her where she can build one.

6. **DEMONSTRATE HOW YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BEHAVE.** Ex: If your child pulls a cat's tail, *show* her how to pet a cat. Do not rely on words alone.

7. **GIVE CHOICES RATHER THAN COMMANDS.** Decision-making empowers children; commands invite a power struggle. Ex: "Would you like to brush your teeth before or after putting your pajamas on?"

8. **MAKE SMALL CONCESSIONS.** Ex: "I'll let you skip brushing your teeth tonight because you are so tired."

9. **provide for a period of preparation.** Ex: If you are counting on company for dinner, tell your child how you expect him to behave. Be specific. Role-playing can help prepare children for potentially difficult situations.

10. **let natural consequences occur** (when appropriate). Don't rescue too much. Ex: A child who does not hang up her bathing suit and towel may find them still wet the next day. (But don't create artificial consequences.)

11. **Communicate your own feelings.** Let children know how their behavior affects you. Ex: "I get so tired of cleaning up these crumbs in the living room."

12. **use actions when necessary.** Ex: If your child insists on running across streets on your walks together, hold his hand tightly (while explaining the dangers).

13. **Hold your child.** Children who are acting aggressively or obnoxiously can benefit from holding, in a loving and supportive way, which allows them to channel their pent-up feelings into healing tears.

14. **remove your child from the situation, and stay with her.** Use the time for listening, sharing feelings, holding, and conflict-resolution.

15. **Do it together, be playful.** Many conflict situations can be turned into games. Ex: "Let's pretend we're the seven dwarfs while we clean up." "Let's take turns brushing each other's teeth."

16. **Defuse the situation with laughter.** Ex: If your child is mad at you, invite him to have a playful pillow fight with you. Play your part by surrendering dramatically. Laughter helps resolve anger & feelings of powerlessness.

17. **Make a deal, negotiate.** Ex: If you are ready to leave the playground and your child is having fun, reach an agreement on the number of times she may go down the slide before leaving.

18. **Do mutual conflict-resolution.** Discuss ongoing conflicts with your children, state your own needs, and ask for their help in finding solutions. Determine rules together. Hold family meetings.

19. **Revise your expectations.** Young children have intense feelings and needs, and are naturally loud, curious, messy, willful, impatient, demanding, forgetful, self-centered, and full of energy. Try to accept them as they are.

20. **Take a parental time-out.** Leave the room and do whatever is needed to regain your sense of composure and good judgment. Ex: call a friend, cry, meditate, or take a shower.

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