

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

The Bible gives a great deal of insight and advice about effective parenting. As we seek to parent our children in healthy and positive ways, how do we reconcile verses such as the following in our blueprint for positive parenting?

“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him”
(Proverbs 13:24).

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger”
(Proverbs 15:1).

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it”
(Proverbs 22:6).

“Love is patient, love is kind”
(1 Corinthians 13:4).

“Do everything in love”
(1 Corinthians 16:14).

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”
(Ephesians 6:4).

“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God”
(1 Thessalonians 2:11).

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing”
(1 Thessalonians 5:11).

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”
(James 1: 19b).

Many parents consider discipline to be synonymous with punishment, but it is not. Discipline is training that enables a young person to make appropriate choices in a climate of warmth and support.

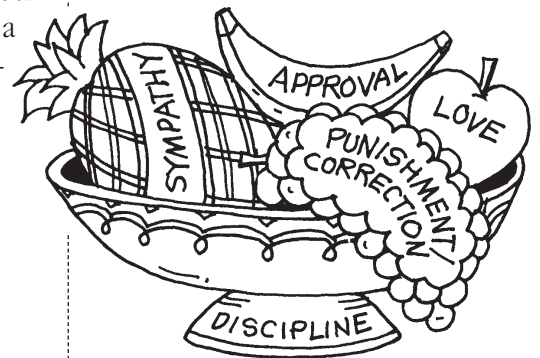
THE ABC'S OF DISCIPLINE

**The ABC's of discipline are:
Antecedents—Behaviors—
Consequences.**

As parents, we tend to look at our children's misbehavior and then wonder what consequences, penalties or punishment to apply to change that behavior. But to reduce the number and frequency of misbehaviors, and to create a positive home climate, we need to concentrate on the antecedents of (the things that came before) the misbehaviors. Simply put, when kids do not feel loved, are not listened to, and do not receive

approval for appropriate behaviors, their tendency to misbehave will be much greater.

Now, imagine a bowl of fruit. Think of the bowl as discipline. Think of the fruit in the bowl as love, sympathy, approval and punishment/correction. The essential ingredients to a positive approach to parenting is one that includes all four components.



A short summary of the first three essential ingredients will be helpful before we discuss punishment or corrective measures when a child misbehaves (the topic of a future article).

LOVE

Love needs to be unconditional, and it needs to be expressed to your child in his or her language of love. All young people need eye contact, physical

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(Continued from previous page.)

contact and focused attention. They need you to tune in to their language of love. If they want pizza when you take them out to dinner, don't take them to a hamburger joint. If they'd like to go to a movie, don't take them bowling. Showing love to your children in the above fashion will help them feel valued, which in turn will result in less misbehavior.

SYMPATHY

Sympathy involves really listening to and accepting your kids' feelings—especially their feelings of anger. It means attempting to comfort them when they are hurting. *Listen* when your chil-

dren talk to you; don't immediately start giving advice, don't tell them why they shouldn't feel that way, and don't feel you have to do something to solve their problems. Simply listening solves many problems.

APPROVAL

Approval involves praise and/or other rewards for appropriate behavior. When you praise your kids, be sure to look at them, move close to them, be specific with your praise, and praise them frequently. Setting up tangible rewards for achieving specific goals will also motivate kids to achieve goals.

When kids are punished for misbehavior, they know what they shouldn't do, but do not necessarily learn what they *should* do. Approval for appropriate behavior is how they will learn that behavior.

Did you receive love, sympathy and approval as a child? If not, you may have to make a more conscious, deliberate effort to use these tools in your family. You may even feel awkward when you first begin to apply these strategies, but don't give up. Time, practice and patience will make use of these tools feel more natural.

A CHALLENGE TO YOU:

1. Which of the three tools (love, sympathy, approval) do you need to use more in your family?
2. Choose specific strategies you will use to apply these tools and create a more positive home climate (let my child choose an outing, begin the "Marbles in a Jar" technique, etc.).

