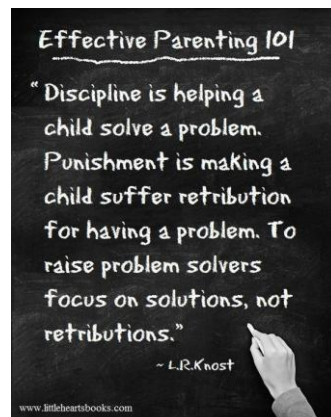


PUNISHMENT VERSUS DISCIPLINE

There are few issues parents feel more strongly about than those regarding the discipline and punishment of their children. Although people may use these terms interchangeably, they mean quite different things.

Discipline is the process of teaching a child the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Good discipline should be a positive force focusing on what a child *is* allowed to do. The goal of discipline is to help a child change impulsive, random behaviour into controlled, purposeful behaviour. Discipline is used to teach and guide and should therefore be reinforced through appropriate parental modelling, the discussion of suitable behaviours, firmness and reminders. Punishment is one technique of discipline. Punishment may be physical (such as a hiding) or psychological (such as disapproval, isolation from others or withdrawal of privileges). The goal of punishment is to reduce unacceptable behaviour¹.



Some of the key differences between these two approaches to behaviour management can be summarised as follows:

Punishment:	Discipline:
Focus on past behaviour	Focus on future behaviour
Goal is to judge, punish, elicit fear	Goal is to teach, problem solve, improve decisions
Encourages External Control: Teaches children that it is someone else's responsibility to monitor and control their behaviour	Encourages Internal Control: Teaches children that they are responsible for their own behaviour and the consequences thereof
Impairs communication	Requires time, patience and understanding
Focus is on the parent's emotions and behaviour	Focus is on the child's emotions and behaviour
Teaches children to fear being 'caught out'	Develops long-term self control and cooperation
Examples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your child throws food on the floor so you shout/take his food away/put him in timeout. Your child refuses to do his homework, so you lecture him about it and send him to bed without dinner. Your child leaves his bike on the lawn for the third time in a week, so you send him to his room. 	Examples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your child throws food on the floor so you make him clean it up to teach him that it takes work to keep the house clean. Your child refuses to do his homework, so you let the reality of a failing grade teach the lesson of why homework is important. Your child leaves his bike on the lawn for the third time in a week, so you take away his bike privileges until he shows you he can take care of his things².

Effective discipline helps children learn to control their behaviour so that they act according to their ideas of what is right and wrong, not because they fear punishment. For example, they are honest because they think it is wrong to be dishonest, not because they are afraid of getting caught³.

For a list of references and links to more information on this topic please visit <http://www.christinedarney.co.za/Psych-Ed/psych-ed.html>