

Building teacher student relationship through positive discipline

M. Ravi Babu *

Faculty of Education, Osmania University, Hyderabad- 500 007

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ABSTRACT

Discipline is the practice of teaching or training a person to obey rules or a code of behaviour in both the short and long terms. While punishment is meant to control a child's behaviour, discipline is meant to develop a child's behaviour, especially in matters of conduct. It is meant to teach child self-control and confidence by focusing on what it is we want the child to learn and what the child is capable of learning. It is the basis for guiding children on how to be in harmony with themselves and get along with other people. Positive Discipline is the outcome of the activities and experiences that inculcates in the individual virtues of self – control based on Reason and not on Force. It is the outcome of Persuasion and not of Compulsion. It comes out of doing rather than of talking. Like religion it cannot be taught but can only be caught and practiced. Children need to be taught so that they understand and follow social rules. The ultimate goal of discipline is for children to understand their own behaviour, take initiative, be responsible for their choices, and respect themselves and others.

Keywords: Positive Discipline, Constructive Discipline, Communication, Misbehavior

Introduction

“Catch students doing the right thing and reward them immediately. This is the core of positive discipline”.

Positive Discipline is a discipline model used by schools that focuses on the positive points of behaviour, based on the idea that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviors.¹ The Positive Discipline philosophy is based on work from Alfred Adler, a psychologist who believed that humans, including children are primarily "social beings".² Adler formed theories based on the premise that people (and children) want to be in relationship in others and in relationships in groups of people. Adler believed that we humans make most of our decisions based on this need to belong in a relationship and belong in a family, classroom, peer group, etc.

J. E. Brown writes that discipline like honour and peace has almost as many different meanings as it has uses. He defines Discipline as, “A cooperative mental attitude in which each member of the class freely gives of his best because he feels himself a member of a corporate body whose aims are recognized as worthy and misbehaviors on the part of any member is condemned by the whole body because it is

recognized not only or even chiefly as a crime against the central authority, but as an offence against the whole ‘community’. The aim of such discipline is to produce self-reliant, self-controlled men and women who will work without supervision. This is the ideal stage and is known as Positive Discipline.³

A.S. Neill writes that in the disciplined home, the children have no rights but in the spoiled home, they have all the rights. The proper home is one in which children and adults have equal rights and the same applies to school (1960, p.107). Neill goes on to say further that life is hard, and we must discipline / train the children so that they will fit into life later on. Evidence shows that girls and boys respond better to positive approaches, including negotiation and systems of rewards, rather than punishment through verbal, physical, or emotional abuse. In other words, they internalize a positive process of thinking and behaving that can last a lifetime. Discipline shapes a child's behaviour and helps them to learn self-control when it provides encouragement, not painful, meaningless consequences.⁴

The Meaning of Discipline

Discipline is the assertion of willpower over more base desires, and is usually understood to be synonymous with self control. Self-discipline can be defined as the ability to motivate oneself in spite of a negative emotional state. Qualities associated with self-discipline include willpower, hard work, and persistence. Positive discipline contrasts with negative discipline. Negative discipline may involve angry, destructive, or violent responses to inappropriate behavior.

According to Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), “Discipline is the fruit, the valuable by product of cooperative work willingly undertaken and efficiently completed.” As Paul Woodring puts it, “If by discipline we mean letting the child learn that there are certain restrictions and controls which society place upon the individual and that

Address:

M. Ravi Babu

Senior Research Fellow

Faculty of Education, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Tel: +91 8019121942

Email: ravimatangi@gmail.com

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children are not exempt from these controls, there seems to be no sound psychological reason for avoiding discipline. Indeed, such discipline would seem to be an essential part of education" (1953, p.137).⁵

According to Woodrings, "A properly disciplined classroom is one in which the rules are reasonable and in which they are so well accepted by the children that violations are comparatively rare. It is not one in which violations frequently occur and are severely punished....." The rules appropriate to a classroom are the rules of normal civilized behavior of individuals in a social setting. This involves courtesy and a consideration for others (1953, p.136).⁶

Classification of Discipline

1. The Repressionists: They are Authoritarian in nature. They believe in the 'theory of flogging'. Discipline is enforced from above and is known as 'external discipline'. It is based on fear, force and coercion. A child is loaded by many 'dos' and 'don'ts'.
2. The Impressionists: They are Democratic in nature. They believe that 'impression' rather than repression should form the basis of discipline. In the words of John Adams, "Impressionists are those who still seek to dominate but without using the savage way of repression." According to Ross, "The compelling power of the educator's personality takes the place of punishment; it is his personal influence and that of the school system which he plans and governs that are effective in ensuring that desired modes of behavior are followed. There is a reign of respect and love rather than one of terror."
3. The Emancipationists: They believe in the doctrine of 'Laissez Faire' or 'Free Discipline'. This is the outcome of the teachings of educationists like Rousseau, Froebel; Montessori etc. 'Save the Child' is the slogan of these educationists.⁷

Reason for Children Misbehaving in the Classroom

- The work may be too easy or too hard for the student.
- The work is not interesting and the student is bored.
- The teaching methods may not fit the student's learning style.
- The student may not be prepared.
- The expectations are unclear or unreasonable.
- The student has poor social skills, cannot communicate well with you or others, or has low self-esteem.

General causes of Misbehavior:

1. **Boredom:** Many students get into mischief simply because they are bored with class work and can't think of anything else to do. Obvious solutions: Keep them busy. Make sure they know what they are supposed to be doing. Make class work meaningful and interesting. Take into account readiness.
2. **Release of Frustration and Tension:** When students are frustrated, tension builds up until they are forced to react. Obvious solutions: Provide frequent breaks and changes of pace. Be on the alert for the point of

diminishing returns. Alternate intensive, laborious activities with relaxing ones. If the class is on edge because of the weather, an impending vacation, a game, or whatever, have more breaks and allow more activity and discussion.

3. **Desire for Attention, recognition, Status:** Some students misbehave because they want attention, and negative attention is better than none at all. A pupil who can't achieve success in schoolwork, is a poor athlete, and is not personable may seek recognition and status by being the class pest. Obvious Solutions: Offer "legal" opportunities for gaining attention and satisfaction. Have the child compete against himself. Try to "dignify" all achievements by stressing improvement. Give positive attention in the form of favorable comments and encouragement. Give recognition for many different kinds of ability.

Students Behaviour: The Need to Belong

The ultimate goal of student behaviour is to fulfill the need to belong. This desire to belong is a fundamental need, one that is shared by children and adults alike. Each one of us continually strives to find and maintain a place of significance, a place to belong. Most students spend several hours a day in school, so their ability to find their place in the classroom group, and the school at large, is of major importance. Moreover, whatever method each student chooses to use in achieving the goal of belonging – either through proper behaviour or misbehaviour – this method is selected early in life and becomes the lifestyle that characterizes that person.^{8,9}

Three 'C's: Sense of Belonging

Students need to satisfy **three 'C's** in order to experience a sense of belonging.¹⁰

- They need to feel **Capable** of completing tasks in a manner that meets the needs of the classroom and school;
- They need to feel they can **Connect** successfully with teachers and classmates; and
- They need to know they **Contribute** to the group in a significant way.

The three factors that affect students' abilities to satisfy the three 'C's, and which require action are:

1. The quality of the teacher-student relationship should be based on trust, mutual respect, and understanding (not fear);
2. The strength of the classroom climate for success (for instance, all children feel that they are included, that they are valued, and that they can work together cooperatively and effectively);
3. The appropriateness of the classroom structure (how it is managed, the topic of the next section in this document).

By finding ways to satisfy these three C's along these three lines, teacher can fulfill students' need to belong and therefore prevent misbehaviour that may arise in their search to satisfy the needs. Teacher can also inspire both well-behaved and passive students to actively participate in the classroom. In all cases, one of the strongest tools teacher has is encouragement,

without which students cannot develop the tools to succeed and achieve their sense of belonging.

Criteria for Effective Positive Discipline are:¹²

- ❖ Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance)
- ❖ Is mutually respectful and encouraging. (Kind and firm at the same time.)
- ❖ Is effective long-term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive.)
- ❖ Teaches important social and life skills. (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community.)
- ❖ Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.)

Positive Disciplinary Actions

Following is a list of positive disciplinary actions that can take to guide students whose misbehaviour is demanding attention:

1. Catch them being good; praise them when they are not seeking attention and misbehaving.
2. Ignore the behaviour when possible, giving the child positive attention during pleasant times.
3. Teach them to ask for attention (for instance, make “notice me, please” cards that they raise when they have a question).
4. Give them a stern “eye” (look) but do not speak.
5. Stand close by rather than far away (there’s no need for attention-getting behaviour if you are standing next to them).
6. Target-stop-do; that is, target the student by name, identify the behaviour to be stopped, tell the student what he is expected to do at that moment, let him make the decision about what he does next and its consequences; .
7. Do the unexpected, such as turn the lights off, play a musical sound, lower your voice, change your voice, talk to the wall.
8. Distract the student, such as ask a direct question, ask a favour, give choices, and change the activity.

Seven Principles for Positive Child Discipline

1. Respect the child’s dignity
2. Develop pro-social behaviour, self-discipline, and character
3. Maximize the child’s active participation
4. Respect the child’s developmental needs and quality of life
5. Respect the child’s motivation and life views

6. Assure fairness (equity and non-discrimination) and justice
7. Promote solidarity

Suggestions for Maintaining Classroom Discipline

- Consider establishing some class rules
- Be friendly but firm. Act confident, especially the first day.
- Have a variety of disciplinary techniques planned in advance.
- To make an effort to re-establish rapport when acted rashly with students.
- Try to avoid threats.
- Be prompt, consistent, and reasonable.
- When you have control, ease up – some.

The Tools and Concepts of Positive Discipline Include:

- Mutual respect: Adults model firmness by respecting themselves and the needs of the situation, and kindness by respecting the needs of the child.
- Identifying the belief behind the behavior: Effective discipline recognizes the reasons kids do what they do and works to change those beliefs, rather than merely attempting to change behavior.
- Effective communication and problem solving skills.
- Discipline that teaches (and is neither permissive nor punitive).
- Focusing on solutions instead of punishment.
- Encouragement (instead of praise): Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment.

Building Teacher-Student Relationship

Teachers who use positive discipline respect, nurture, and support their students. They understand why a child behaves – or misbehaves – as he or she does, as well as how the child sees him or herself, which may cause misbehavior.¹¹ They also empathize with the child’s abilities and his or her situation in life. The teacher’s expectations of the child are realistic, taking the child as he or she is, and not on what he or she should be. The teacher understands that misbehaviour is a constructive learning event, both for the child and for his or her teacher, and that it is an important, natural part of the child’s development, not a threat to a teacher’s authority. By building such a positive relationship on understanding and empathy, students come to trust their teachers and to value their approval. As students respond to the positive nature of the relationship and consistent discipline, the incidence of misbehaviour decreases, and the quality of the relationship improves even further. Towards this end, the best teachers are ones who are good role models and about whom children care enough to want to imitate and please.¹²

Teachers who use positive discipline believe in their students’ abilities and communicate affection and respect for their students. When teachers are willing to observe their students and respond in ways that encourage positive

behaviour, they help their students become responsible for their own behaviour, and they reduce the likelihood of misbehaviour.

The correct behaviour has to be reinforced. When rewards are used, they should always be immediate and small, yet gratifying. This process is effective for individual children. Moreover, for those of you who are working in large classes (groups of children), the “trick” is to make the children feel they are on a “winning team” (the class as a whole) and to praise each child’s efforts in being a good team member.

Conclusion:

In establishing Classroom discipline a teacher/educator has to analyze common causes of misbehavior and take steps to anticipate and perhaps eliminate actions stemming from them, by planning specific techniques ahead of time. Positive Discipline is a symbol of caring to a child. Positive Discipline is guidance. If there is love, there is no such thing as being too tough with a child. Positive discipline contrasts with negative discipline. Negative discipline may involve angry, destructive, or violent responses to inappropriate behavior but positive discipline uses the full range of reinforcement options

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