

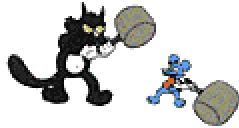
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## Discipline that Disciples by Karl Bastian



*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,  
but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*

**Proverbs 22:15**

*Do not withhold discipline from a child;  
if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.*

**Proverbs 23:13**

*The rod of correction imparts wisdom,  
but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

**Proverbs 29:15**

**"It's FUN!"**

**"I still wanna be a kid!"**

**"I can make a difference tomorrow *today!*"**

These are a few of the reasons I've been given for why people go into children's ministry. When asked what they like least, the #1 answer is always "discipline." Where's the "fun" in that? Who wants to be the "grumpy grown-up?" How can you make a difference tomorrow if they won't even behave today?!?

Discipline, if not the greatest, is one of the top challenges in any ministry to children. That may be why you skipped straight to this article! We are always on the look out for more help in this ever present challenge! You will find what I have to share here at first, perhaps, surprising, but in the end I hope you will find as I have, that it will make a *real* difference in the way you handle "discipline problems."

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In fact, you will no longer see them as "problems," but as opportunities for discipleship! After all, Jesus did not say, "Go Ye into all the world making children behave." NO! He said to MAKE DISCIPLES! Not only do we want to see kids get saved, but then our goal should be to disciple them. Interesting that both "disciple" and "discipline" are so close in meaning! Both mean to train and instruct, but where "disciple" focuses on training and instructing, "discipline" focuses on correcting and changing. We tend to want to correct "bad" behavior, to change children into what we want them to be and in the process we often neglect to truly train and instruct them in the way they should go. In Psalm 32:8,9 God says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. 9 Do not be like the horse or the mule, *which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*" Do we try to make our children like a horse or mule who will obey because of our "bits and bridles," whatever they may be? Or do we use times of challenge as *opportunities* for instruction, teaching and counsel? Here are some facts that should help:

First of all, it is essential to realize that **KIDS ARE SUPPOSED TO MISBEHAVE!** "What!" you cry. How I can I say such a horrible thing? Well, because it's true! Granted, a high percentage of "bad behavior" is due to human depravity and the sinful nature, but the majority of it is simply because kids are new on this planet and are learning about life! That's right! LEARNING! How did the great explorers conquer this land? Through a lot of wrong turns and often by getting lost! How did the great scientists discover new technologies? After a lot of mistakes and boo-boos. CHILDREN ARE EXPLORING, THEY ARE EXPERIMENTING! And in the process they make a lot of wrong turns and mistakes.... But they are better because of them! Your job as a parent or teacher is to be their "trail-guide," to be their lab coach. Your job is not to punish them when they get off the path or make an error, but to guide them back onto the right track or the right solution. When discipline is viewed *this way*, it looses much of its irritation and frustration for that "bad behavior" truly isn't "bad" at all, it's good behavior for LEARNING! So don't be shocked when a child misbehaves! Be ready to disciple!

Secondly, don't be fooled! **KIDS WELCOME AND WANT DISCIPLINE THAT DISCIPLES!** Doubtful? True, you will never have a child come up and say, "Dad, I believe I need a spanking before bed tonight," nor a student, "Teacher, I think I need to be separated from my best friend here and moved to another seat." BUT, children are looking for guidance! What may be taken as "testing" you is really children looking for guidance. What may be taken as "open rebellion" is really children looking for consistency. They want to see if they understood correctly, or if that way a "one time" condition. What may be taken as "sneaky" or "pushing the limits" is really children seeking to define the boundaries. That is why it is so important for parents and teachers to set specific rules and

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clear boundaries so that when children "experiment" their guide is not confused or inconsistent.

O.K. You've accepted that hard-to-believe fact that "bad behavior" is normal and acceptable, and you are *trying* to believe that children welcome and even *want* discipline that disciplines, but that still doesn't help you to know what to DO when you are confronted with the discipline situation. Cheer up! Now you have a strong foundation and are ready to learn the S.M.I.L.L.E. approach to disciple! You will be disciplining with a **S.M.I.L.L.E.**

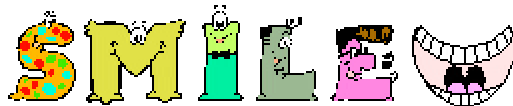
*Smiles and frowns cost the same, nothing,  
but the difference in effect is enormous!*

*A smile is curve that can set a lot of things straight.*

*Consider yourself improperly dressed  
unless you are wearing a smile. ☺*

**The S.M.I.L.L.E. Approach** is more than just smiling all the time. ☺ It is a positive approach to dealing with negative situations. Understanding and applying this principle will revolutionize your approach to children and drastically change your results. Developing the *art* of "**Positive Discipline**" will not only create a peaceful classroom (or home!), but provide longer life and sanity for you as well! ☺

**The S.M.I.L.L.E. Approach** is a way of interacting with children that will almost eliminate your discipline "problems," build up kids, and even make you a friend of children! *Read carefully!*



*A smile always adds to your face value!*

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Let's begin with the letter "S" in S.M.I.L.E....

## **S**PEAK POSITIVELY!

**POSITIVE:** Good, beneficial, helpful, constructive, making a definite contribution, uplifting, *independent of circumstances*. (Note these words in the next paragraph...)

Our words should ALWAYS be positive. Words that focus on the **GOOD** in a kid. Words that are **BENEFICIAL** and **HELPFUL**. Words that **BUILD THEM UP**, never tear them down. Words make a **DEFINITE CONTRIBUTION** to the development of a child and so should be **UPLIFTING**. In addition, our words should be positive **REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES**. Even when a child is disruptive or disobedient it should not be seen as "bad behavior" but rather an opportunity for growth. This is easy to say and even easier to agree with, but it takes intentional effort to implement.

It is easy to use positive words when the situation is positive. It is in the difficult situations that it takes skill and practice to master. That is why I refer to Positive Discipline as a *art*. It takes time, training, a little natural instinct, and creativity. But it *is* possible. In fact, it is possible to correct negative situations **WITHOUT EVER USING THE WORD "NO."** That's right!

Whenever I challenge children's workers to never use the word 'NO' I always get a skeptic's reception. "IMPOSSIBLE!" they cry. You've never worked with *my* kids! However, every time I have challenged them to try it, they have *always* returned amazed and converted to my "Never Say No" philosophy.

How is this done? In any situation there is always a positive angle. Look for something to praise or explain the positive action desired, instead of forbidding the negative one.

**STEP #1** Affirm the child's worth. "*How's my buddy doing?*"

**STEP #2** Demonstrate a positive expectation.

*"You're such a good kid!"*

NOTE: **ALL** kids are "good" even if their *behavior* isn't.

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**STEP #3** Describe the **POSITIVE ACTION** you seek.

Tell children what you want them to **DO**, not what they are **NOT** to do. Otherwise you reinforce the negative, and create a situation where there is a battle of the wills. **AVOID CONFRONTATION**. Eliminate rebellion by not giving easy things to rebel against. Every time you say, "Don't..." you are providing a temptation for them to give in to. **LIKE ADULTS**, children are naturally rebellious. If told **NOT** to do something, *that* is exactly what they will want to do. Therefore, **JUST OFFER THEM POSITIVE ACTIONS**. Then their choice is either to follow the suggestion, or remain unchanged. Even if they do not respond at first, you are still better off! For you are still their friend, and instead of adding to their list of crimes, they remain in the same place. The "old way" forces them to get into deeper and deeper trouble. Don't let things build and escalate! **Keep it as one issue!** Once you make it a battle, someone has to win. And for someone to "win" someone must lose. In the end, the teacher wins and the student loses. (or occasionally the other way around!) By using the "new way" you *both* end up **WINNERS**, together!

Here are a few examples of positive speaking in negative situations:

"Trouble" Situation	POSITIVE APPROACH	<i>instead of</i>	NEGATIVE APPROACH
Wants to play during story time.	We will play later, it's story time right now.	<i>instead of</i>	Put that back! No toys now.
Hits another child when wants a toy.	Hands are for helping. Susan will share if you ask her.	<i>instead of</i>	Don't hit! That isn't yours.
Keeps saying, "I want..."	I want that too! Later I will do it with you!	<i>instead of</i>	You can't have it right now.
Child throws a toy at another.	Blocks are for building with, let's make a tower!	<i>instead of</i>	Don't throw that block again or...
Child pushes another child.	Arms are for hugging. I'll hug you, you hug...	<i>instead of</i>	Stop it! Don't push people.
Child is crying.	.....	<i>instead of</i>	Stop crying

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	would make you happy?		
Child wants his mother!	You have a nice mom! She will be here soon!	<i>instead of</i>	Mom can't get you right now.

## **M**INIMIZE CONFLICT!

**MAINTAIN A WARM ATMOSPHERE!** Never let it become YOU vs. THE CHILD. You must always remain on the same side as the child. "A gentle answer turns away tempters, tears, and other fears." (Paraphrase of Proverbs 15:1) It has been said that *gentle words fall lightly, but they have great weight*. Remember Peter's reminder that "love covers a multitude of sins." (I Peter 4:8)

### **WAYS TO STAY ON THE CHILD'S SIDE:**

- **KNEEL DOWN**, a friend talks eye-to-eye.
- **PUT YOUR ARM AROUND THEM**, let them feel loved. (If they ask you to remove it, or shake it off, respect that.)
- **COMPLIMENT THEM**, "Hey! That's a cool jacket."
- **BRING OUT ONE OF THOSE POCKET TOYS** that you bought after reading the second chapter. ☺
- **TELL A JOKE** (whisper in their ear so only they hear.)
- **TALK TO THEM ABOUT OTHER THINGS**. You can distract them from the problem!
- **BEFORE YOU CORRECT THEM, PROTECT THEM**. Make sure they will not be embarrassed or hurt.
- **ADMIT WEAKNESSES OR FAILURES!** "I'm sorry," will go miles *any* time it is needed. "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings, I didn't mean to. I was afraid you would hurt

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yourself." OR "I know this is hard, but I think you can do it!" Go their way a little and they'll come your way a lot!

→ **MAKE A "SECRET" DEAL** and they will feel special! Offer a reward for good behavior. There is a thin line between a reward and bribery. The primary difference is that a reward is optional and freely given whereas a bribe is demanded or expected. Offer rewards, but **DO NOT** accept bribes or "pay" them to obey. Make sure they don't come to expect it *every* time, or you've been bribed! Reward effort, not perfection.

## **I** DENTIFY and ACKNOWLEDGE WANT

Remember the definition of a KID: a unique, one-of-kind individual who WANTS FUN and NEEDS LOVE. The 'S', 'M' and 'E' in the **S.M.I.L.E. Approach** deal with that need for love. The 'I' and 'L' address this DESIRE FOR FUN!

NOTHING THAT A KID WANTS IS BAD! "Huh?!" Yes, it is true! There is good in every request (or demand). What is often not-so-good is the timing of the request, the safety of the request, the cost of the request, the appropriateness of the request, or a host of other reasons why the adult being asked cannot say, "Sure! That's fine!" We **DO** have to say "no" (without actually using the word!) to many of the pleas that come our way.

**BUT! BEFORE WE DENY THE REQUEST,** we must IDENTIFY AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE GOOD IN THE REQUEST! The good may simply be that it "looks like fun!" It may be that it would taste delicious! It may be that it would be fun to play with, listen to, watch (or smash!). By IDENTIFYING *WHY* they desire it, you can GET ON THEIR SIDE by acknowledging that the inner desire is O.K., but then explain why the way they are seeking to fulfill that desire is not. Here are some examples:

<b>KID WANTS...</b>	<b>IDENTIFY WANT</b>	<b>ACKNOWLEDGE WANT</b>
CANDY!	Something yummy to eat (Plus an expression of love when needs are met.)	WOW! That <i>does</i> look yummy! We'll be eating that later! I can't wait!
A TOY!	Simply fun playing, interaction with friends.	I'd love to play with that <i>with you</i> , right after this.

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Front row seat, but they're full.	A good seat, attention, attention of teacher.	I wish I could too! Here, I'll sit <i>with you</i> .
Something that belongs to another child.	Fun with the object, sense of ownership, attention from others that the other is getting.	That is neat, but I like what <i>you</i> brought! Wish I had one like you have!

## LAUGHTER!

*A cheerful heart is good medicine and a cheerful look brings joy to the heart.*

*Proverbs 15:30 and 17:22*

### LAUGHTER IS A POWERFUL TOOL WHEN DEALING WITH CHILDREN!

Keep it handy, sharp, and ready at all times!

## A LAUGHTER GUIDE

**Birth to 1 year** Light tickling, funny faces, peek-a-boo, and rattles. ☺

**1 to 3 years** Threats of tickling will do, simple word games, play with definitions, say goofy things and let them correct you.

**3 to 5 years** Escalate verbal silliness, do everyday things wrong, (read a book upside down, miss the doorway), riddles, knock - knock jokes, and goofed up sentences are a hit!

**5 to 9 years** Absurd riddles (the ones with no point) rewrite song lyrics, slightly alter everyday expressions, unexpectedly.

**9 to 12 years** Have fun yourself, make funny comments about things (not people!) imitate people, (not disrespectfully), experiment!

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*A grimace or a grin - how will your day begin?*

## **E**NCOURAGE and **E**STEEM!

*"When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it;  
the light of my face was precious to them."*

*Job 29:24<sup>N.I.V.</sup>*

The overall theme of the **S.M.I.L.E. Approach** is to AVOID CONFRONTATION. Always be on the side of the child. It should never become a battle of wills, but an opportunity for learning. If a kid is convinced that you love him, understand him, and are his friend, he will do anything you ask!

Your goal is not first to teach, but to encourage and esteem the child. If you can instill a positive self image and an appetite to grow and learn, they will continue to learn long after you cease to teach them. Then your teaching will be long-reaching!

## **25** ways to **BUILD UP** a child:

1. That's great!
2. Good work!
3. Thank you very much!
4. Good idea!
5. That's a good point.
6. I like that.
7. Very interesting.
8. Terrific!
9. You're getting it!
10. AWESOME!
11. Thank you for....
12. Excellent work!
13. Right on!
14. You've got the right idea.
15. Nice going!
16. That's neat!
17. Keep it up!

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18. Exactly!
19. That's much better!
20. Beautiful!
21. That's a good start.
22. Beautiful!
23. Bingo! You got it!
24. You did a GREAT job!
25. I'm proud of you!

## **MAKE YOUR OWN LIST!**

## **BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN NONE OF THIS WORKS?!?!?!?**

Yes, I know there are times, when **NOTHING** seems to work. What do you do then???? Here are some important principles to keep in mind. These are TOUGH, but vital to effective ministry.

**#1 Do not attempt to minister to more kids than you can minister to effectively.** Yes, this may mean turning kids away, limiting enrollment. I understand this is hard for some people to do because of their concern for the kids they are saying "no" to, but consider this: God did not call you to reach ALL kids, just to reach ALL the kids he enables you to reach effectively. Having 25 and having a definite spiritual impact on them is far better than having 100 kids and going nuts and impacting none. Remember, there were times when Jesus ministered to the crowds, but he poured his life into only twelve. Have your big events, but pour your life into a few strategic kids!

**#2 Do not waste time on kids who are hindering effective ministry.** Even Jesus said not to throw pearls before swine. While we hate the thought of calling a kid 'swine', the point is that if a child (or adult) is so disruptive that they are keeping others from being ministered to, then they must be removed. Yes, we still love them, perhaps try to think of other ways to reach them, but still remove them from the program. If a small group is 'ruining' your program - YOU are not the one who should quit (or your workers) but the trouble makers are the ones who need to be made to quit. Don't think you are their only hope. God can still reach them, and your turning them away may be just the wake up call they need. Make sure they know they are welcome back when they can come with the right attitude. Some adults have admitted to me that they were not interested in God as a kid, and were one of those "terrible kids" but that God used the guilt from their behavior then to

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draw them to Himself. So while you may feel you are "giving up" on them, God is not, and you are still a part of what God is doing in their life.

**#3 have clearly communicated rules and consequences for breaking those rules.** Leave room for grace (and some mercy) but grace and mercy are not a license for kids to get away with anything for as long as they want. Kids need boundaries and guide lines and need to experience those boundaries held up by their leaders. If they learn that they can get away with things as a kid, they will begin a lifestyle of trying to bend rules- and what a tragic disservice we do them if WE encourage that while we think we are helping them! Post your rules where they are visible.

**My "Four Rules" are:**

1. Remain seated.
2. Raise your hand to speak.
3. Follow directions. (my 'catch-all') and
4. **HAVE FUN!** But I explain that while FUN is important and a rule I enforce, it requires the first three to exist!

Keep these principles in mind and have the courage to follow them and you should have minimal discipline problems. But the first PLAN OF ACTION is to evaluate *your* performance. Remember, *"If you don't have a plan for the kids, they will have a plan for you!"* Make sure YOU have a plan and are interesting and teaching in a way that draws kids in. THAT is half the battle! Then pray for the wisdom to be as gentle as a dove while as wise as a serpent!

**Lastly, let me say, keep prayer FIRST!**