

From: **KIDS ARE WORTH IT** (Giving ... the Gift of Inner Discipline)  
By: Barbara Coloroso, 1994 Chapter One, pages 17 - 36

### **BRIBES, REWARDS, THREATS, AND PUNISHMENT – POWER AND CONTROL**

“Never rely on rewards and punishments to promote altruistic behaviour. Both tactics send the wrong message: that kindness is a commodity that can be bought or bartered. In the end, loving support and good example are a child’s best lessons in the art of compassion.”

-Elizabeth Navar Finely, “Little Big Hearts”

Bribes, rewards, threats and punishment leave control in the hands of the (adults) and give children the message that “I, as an adult, can and will make you mind,” often with the rationale “for your own good.”

#### **Bribes and Rewards**

Kids who are consistently bribed and rewarded are likely to grow into adults who are overly dependent on others for approval and recognition, lacking their own self-confidence and sense of responsibility. The questions they will often ask are:

What’s in it for me?	What’s the payoff?
Does it count for anything?	Do you like it?
Did you see me do it?	Did I do it right?

#### **Threats and Punishment**

“If you want to prevent a child from developing as normal responsible consciences which will enable him to control himself, build a relationship with him on a punitive basis. Control his behaviour primarily by spanking and scolding, especially scolding.”

-Ross D. Campbell, “How to Really Love Your Child”

Threats and punishment rob a child of his sense of dignity and self worth. They can take the form of: Isolation, Embarrassment and Humiliation, Shaming, Grounding, Brute Force. Faced with domination, manipulation, and control by someone bigger than themselves, children will experience one of three things: Fright, Fight or Flight

### **CREATIVE POWER IS INFLUENCE, NOT FORCE**

“A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still” – German Proverb

Example: A 5 year old struggling to ride a 2 wheeler needs support, literally and figuratively. She needs encouragement. (“I know you can do it. Try again.”)

She doesn’t need threats. (“If you don’t get on that bike right now, I’m going to spank you.” You’ll have to ride a 3 wheeler all your life.”) And once she takes off on her own, she doesn’t need a reward for accomplishing this difficult task. (“If you learn to ride the bike, I’ll get you a new one.” “I’ll give you an ice-cream cone if you ride down the street without any help.”) Her own satisfaction and faith in herself are the best reward. She won’t be able to tell you has these 3 things, but the sense of well-being that they give her goes so deep that she will instinctively strive for them.

### **INFLUENCE AND EMPOWER, NOT CONTROL AND MAKE MIND**

#### **Influence**

One of the great educators of our time, Haim Ginott, commenting on the powerful influence we have on children said:

**“It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather ... I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heat. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”**

### **Empower**

Empowering children involves first giving them a secure, safe, nurturing environment – offering them unconditional love, caring touch, tenderness, and concern for their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. With a strong, loving foundation in place we can begin to give children the opportunity to make choices and decisions, all the while providing a structure on which they can build, increasing their responsibilities and decision making opportunities as they grow. Teaching them to make their own decisions enables them to learn to be responsible individuals who can act in their own best interest, stand up for themselves, and exercise their own rights while respecting the rights and legitimate needs of others.

### **ENCOURAGEMENT, NOT BRIBES AND REWARDS**

Encouragement inspires. It imparts courage and confidence. It fosters and gives support. It helps a child develop a sense of self-pride and enhances internal motivation.

**Encouraging a child means that one or more of the following critical life messages are coming through, either by word or action:** *(Presented in Class)*

**I believe in you**

**I trust you**

**I know you can handle this**

**You are listened to**

**You are cared for**

**You are very important to me**

### **DISCIPLINE NOT PUNISHMENT**

*(Remember Class Discussion: Guidance vs. Discipline)*

Punishment, by nature, is adult-oriented, requires judgment on the part of the adult, imposes power from without, arouses anger and resentment, and invites more conflict. Punishment is doing something to a child when the child behaves in a way that the (adult) judges to be inappropriate or irresponsible. It involves a strong element of moral judgment and demonstrates the (adult’s) ability to control a child by force. It also teaches the child that might makes right.

### **DISCIPLINE WITH AUTHORITY**

Discipline is not judgment, arbitrary, confusing, or coercive. Going back to the Latin roots, *to discipline with authority* means to *give life to meaning*. Our goal as (adults) is to give life to children’s learning – to instruct, to teach, to help them develop self-discipline – an ordering of the self from the inside, not imposition from the outside. Any technique that does not give life to a child’s learning and leaves a child’s dignity intact cannot be called discipline – it is punishment, no matter what language it is clothed in. The following 4 steps of discipline give life to a child’s learning in a way that punishment cannot. Discipline:

1. Shows kids what they have done
2. Gives them ownership of the problem
3. Gives them options for solving the problems
4. Leaves their dignity intact

In giving life to children's learning, discipline involves real-world consequences or intervention, or a combination of the two. It deals with the reality of the situation, not with the power and control of the adult.

Real-world consequences either happen *naturally* or are *reasonable* consequences that are intrinsically related to the child's actions:

- If a child puts her shoes on the wrong feet, her feet will hurt. (*Natural*)
- If a 12 year old borrows your clothes and returns them torn, he needs to get them repaired. (*Reasonable*)
- Coming home late for dinner might mean the child eats a cold supper (*Natural*) or can heat it up. (*Reasonable*)

The lessons are learned without nagging, reminding, or warning. Real-world consequences teach children about the world around them and that they have themselves have positive control over their lives. They can make decisions and solve problems.

**If** natural consequences are not life-threatening, morally threatening or unhealthy, it is good to let the child experience them, without warnings or reminders. But if the natural consequences are life-threatening, morally threatening, or unhealthy ... **you must intervene.**

**Life-Threatening Consequences** – Anytime a child's life would be at risk, there is no question that the adult must intervene. This is no time to teach a lesson.

Example: 2 year old running out into the street.

**Morally Threatening Consequences** – Lynn Leight puts moral issues in the framework of 4 answers to the question: Why can't I?

1. Because it is unkind.
2. Because it is hurtful.
3. Because it is unfair.
4. Because it is dishonest.

**Unhealthy consequences** – If a child is behaving in a way that would put her health at serious risk, a parent or caring adult needs to intervene.

#### **RSVP – FOUR CLUES TO REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES**

When in doubt about a consequence, you can check if all 4 clues are present:

**R** – Is it Reasonable?

**S** – Is it Simple?

**V** – Is it Valuable as a learning tool?

**P** – Is it Practical?

If it isn't all 4 of these, it probably won't be effective and it could be punishment disguised as a reasonable consequence.

#### **GIVING LIFE TO LEARNING – A NEVER ENDING STORY**

Discipline is not just for kids. **We can benefit from discipline (or encouragement) at any age.**

An example from an adult to adult experience of discipline / encouragement:

He didn't do it for me; he didn't bribe me or praise me; he didn't laugh at my efforts; and he didn't threaten me. What he did was:

1. Showed me what I had done wrong.
2. Gave me ownership of the problem.
3. Gave me ways of solving my problem.
4. Most importantly, through the whole process, he left my dignity ... intact.

For more information read or view "**Kids Are Worth It**" by Barbara Coloroso.