

Handout on the workshop

Assertive discipline instead of punishment

1) Role of a disciplinary teacher- guidance committee (discussed)

2) Specific attitudes and skills requested to fulfill the task effectively and supportive for the child's development

The right attitude (according to Carl Rogers core conditions)

- **Realness**- means genuineness. When the facilitator is a real person, being what he/she is, entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade, he/she is much more likely to be effective. It means coming into a direct personal encounter with the learner, meeting him/ her on a person-to-person basis.
- **Acceptance**- means to respect the learner being an imperfect human being with weaknesses, many feelings but also many potentialities. It is an acceptance of this other individual, having worth in his/ her own right. Recognizing the child's value implies showing your respect as well as love and acceptance to fulfill their development.
- **Empathy**- When the teacher has the ability to understand the student's reactions from the inside. Students feel deeply appreciative when they are simply understood from their own point of view, not only from the teacher's view which can be more evaluating or judging.
But....When resolving a conflict, you need to distinguish between empathy and sympathy!!! To empathize is to understand the child's needs and interests. It is a fundamental requirement to understand the child. Sympathizing with the child is more biased. It is relating to our personal likings and disliking. We adopt only a subjective attitude towards the conflict, which is not beneficial to the child.

Concept of the self

1. Personal self- concept (facts or one's own opinions about oneself, such as "I have brown eyes" or "I am attractive")
2. Social self-concept (one's perceptions about how one is regarded by others: "people think I have a great sense of humor")
3. self-ideals (what or how one would like to be: "I want to be a good human" or "I wish I were slim").

The self concept and the self ideals do influence and regulate each other and should be in balance to have a positive self approval and self esteem. If our current perception and opinion of our self is differing considerably from our ideal self it can result into frustration and individuals tend to regulate it for example through aggressive behavior.

Therefore empathic understanding, encouraging messages and affirmations are vital to minimize the gap. With acknowledging the strengths and appraisal we can support the child to perform a positive self concept which results in a positive conduct.

Factors influencing and building the self concept and self-esteem:

1. Within the **family**:
 - harmful: Lack of affection as well as overprotection, frequent family conflicts, unmeasured permissiveness.
 - helpful: Parents should be a firm but affectionate authority to the child. Children need a framework of consistent and clear rules of behavior.

2. **Peers** function as social comparisons. These exert an increasingly important role as soon as the child starts going to school.
3. A **teachers'** personality and behavior:
Teachers need to provide an appropriate degree of freedom to children where there is enough room to learn to make choices and decisions.
If the teacher acts respectfully the student will feel respected and well thought of and learns to respect and have higher regard for him/ herself.
The teacher's affection will create feelings of personal dignity and commitment in his/her student.
4. **Own personality:** Around the age of 12, they not only seek the value judgment of others (parents, teachers, peers, etc.) exclusively, but also establish their own value according to their personal competence and criteria.
It is important for them to create the habit of appreciating, understanding, taking care of and rewarding the self. We should help children to discover their potential and their own resources.

Building communication skills

Please, listen...

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice,
You have not done what I asked

When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me bye
I shouldn't feel that way
You are trampling on my feelings

When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something
To solve my problem
You have failed me

Strange that may seem
Listen! All that I have asked is that you
listen
Don't talk or do – just hear me
Advice is cheap- 20 cents will get you.

Agony aunt in the newspaper

And I can do for myself
I'm not helpless, may be discouraged and
faltering
But not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can
And need to do for myself
You contribute to my fear and inadequacy

But when you accept as a simple fact
That I feel what I feel
No matter how irrational
Then I can stop crying to convince you
And get about this business
Of understanding what
is behind this irrational feeling

- *Author unknown*

Active listening skills

- Don't talk about yourself.
- Don't change the topic. Sometimes, children talk about things that are important to them, which could seem non-important for adults, but we have to learn to give them space.
- Don't provide advice, diagnoses, valuations, criticisms or appeasing remarks.
- Don't deny or ignore the child's feelings.
- Don't pretend you understand if you didn't.
- Show that you understand if you did.
- Don't plan what you will say.
- Ask about concerns, anxieties, needs and difficulties. It is not a problem to demonstrate to a child our fear, anger or sadness. It does not make us worse, but makes us a real person.

- Paraphrase to check on the contents of the utterance.
- Pay attention to non-verbal language.
- Keep conversation in focus.
- Respect confidentiality of contents. When a child trusts us, it is important to respect this confidentiality in the same way we would do with an adult.
- Allow for periods of silence.

Responding

In a communication, all answers are valid but their usefulness depends on the context and the goal pursued. *Types of Responses:*

Advising

- Be careful with giving advises: a) It can convey the message that you know everything and the other is stupid. b) It is fast and easy but may convey we are not taking the interest and time needed to understand the others' problems. c) It expresses your values, needs and perspectives. The client has to find his solution according to his needs and perspective. This is the only long term effective way!

Analyzing and interpreting

- Be careful with giving the message of "*I know you better than you know yourself*" "*I can easily analyze you and tell you what you feel*". Better to respect and listen to the client. The process of explaining him/her self is needed to understand one self better and to get clear.

Asking and enquiring

- It helps to understand.
- It helps the sender to clarify and explain his/her message, to propose issues from a different viewpoint.
- Close questions elicit short, superficial answers. Watch out suggestive questions ("you want to tell me everything- don't you?"). Open questions encourage sharing of feelings; reveal a deeper interest in helping ("what can I do for you?"). Bombarding only with questions can cause uneasiness.

Soothing and supporting responses

- aim to reduce the sender's anxiety
- They convey interest or understanding
- It is not a "*you shouldn't feel the way you do*" reply!!!! Respect the feeling the person has!!!

Paraphrasing and understanding (aims to give back the same message we received from the other by using other words or view points).

- They should stress the most important aspects. They help reach the root of the idea.
- They aim at understanding the sender's feelings.
- They promote clarification for a better understanding of what is being communicated.
- They help senders to understand themselves and their feelings regarding the conflict.
- They create empathy and favor active listening.
- They help to see the problem from the other's viewpoint.

'You' and 'I' messages (don't blame the other,- express rather your feelings and wishes!)

'You' messages: "You, selfish jerk! You think the TV belongs to you. Well, it's my turn now."

'I' messages: "I feel annoyed when you switch the channel without asking. I want to be able to watch my show all the way through."

Some guiding questions to evaluate your communication:

Did I listen actively?

Did I use the right questions and try to understand the other?

Was I a mirror favoring the understanding of the issue?

Did I summarize appropriately the problem in its essential elements?

Does my summary include the emotions of my listeners and my own?

4) Research about the impact of punishment

Forms of punishment:

Application of an aversive stimulus (e.g. corporal-, verbal abuse, humiliating punishment)

Reject or withdraw a positive stimulus (e.g. love, attention, excluding from group)

While **physical punishment** is obvious, **humiliating punishment** is more subtle. It includes various forms such as verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation or ignoring a child. It breaches children's fundamental rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity.

Consequences of Corporal Punishment

Accumulated research supports the theory that corporal punishment is an ineffective discipline strategy with children of all ages and, furthermore, that it is often dangerous. It rather produces in its victims anger, resentment, and low self-esteem. It teaches violence and revenge as solutions to problems, and perpetuates itself, as children imitate what they see adults doing. Research results of corporal punishment:

- Corporal punishment sends a message to the child that violence is a viable option for solving problems (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997).
- Children whose parents use corporal punishment to control antisocial behavior show more antisocial behavior themselves over a long period of time, regardless of race and socioeconomic status, and regardless of whether the mother provides cognitive stimulation and emotional support (Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Kazdin, 1987; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997).
- Children who get spanked regularly are more likely over time to cheat or lie, be disobedient at school, bully others, and show less remorse for wrongdoing (Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997).
- Corporal punishment adversely affects children's cognitive development. Children who are spanked perform poorly on school tasks compared to other children (Straus & Mathur, 1995; Straus & Paschall, 1998).
- There is a high risk that corporal punishment gets out of control after some time – more often and more severe (Kadushin & Martin, 1981; Straus & Yodanis, 1994).
- Adults who were hit as children are more likely to be depressed or violent themselves (Berkowitz, 1993; Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Straus, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus & Kantor, 1992).
- The more a child is hit, the more likely it is that the child, when an adult, will hit his or her children, spouse, or friends (Julian & McKenry, 1993; Straus, 1991; Straus, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus & Kantor, 1992; Widom, 1989; Wolfe, 1987).

- Corporal punishment is degrading, contributes to feelings of helplessness and humiliation, robs a child of self-worth and self-respect, and can lead to withdrawal or aggression (*Sternberg et al., 1993; Straus, 1994*).

Possible reactions to punishment:

1. Punishment brings up emotions of fear, anger, embarrassment, hate etc.
2. It leads to hiding the bad behavior, to frustration and no alternative positive way is learned!!!
3. The individual is rather focused on the emotion or anger towards the adult who imposed the punishment than on the behavior that inspired the punishment.
4. Hence there is no development of principles regarding right or wrong.

Some children decide not to repeat behavior that caused the punishment; but they do so out of fear and intimidation.

Other children while being punished make a vow not to get caught next time.

Some adults make the mistake of thinking that children continue to misbehave because the punishment wasn't severe enough to teach them a lesson. So they punish again, more severely – and children find more clever ways to handle it or to get even.

These children can become very rebelling teenagers who revolt against parents/teachers, run away, get some time even involved with drugs etc. The irony is that the child has hurt himself/herself through revenge as much or more than he/she has hurt his/her parents!

Early researches by Skinner already showed that there is no extinction of unwanted behavior through punishment - if not always punished it only disappears as temporary suppression!!!

Researches in kinder gardens or care homes illustrate that punishment is only effective, when the adult is present (which is not always feasible). It even motivates some times the children to hit others more and harder, as soon as the adult leaves the room or turns around.

???WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES???

5) Alternative interventions and its impact

Assertive discipline as an alternative to punishment

The lack of knowledge or information on non-violent methods is often the reason why adults apply physical or psychological punishment. Even though there is a positive purpose behind and adults don't aim to be violent to their children.

No doubt that norms and limits are needed to teach to the youngsters to behave as responsible and socially assertive individuals who are respectful towards others as well as towards themselves. How can we reach this??

We need a powerful and effective way to act as a model to encourage positive and non-violent relationships. The following refers to the techniques of **assertive discipline**.

This approach focuses on respect and responsibility. It is child-focused, participatory and inclusive. It encourages adults also to empathize with a child's point of view and where possible to negotiate with children, instead of simply imposing by force (physical or psychological) only the adult's perspective.

Applying logical consequences

Adults must take the leadership role by using techniques that inspire a positive atmosphere for winning children over rather than winning over children. One of these techniques is the natural and logical consequence instead of punishment. A natural consequence is anything that happens naturally. For example, when you stand in the rain, you get wet. But there are times when natural consequences are not practical (when a child is in danger, for example, adults cannot allow a child to experience the natural consequence of playing in the street). One intervention is the application of logical consequences where following criteria are taken into consideration:

- A) The rules and consequences have to be discussed with the child in advance. He/she must be at least acknowledged/ informed about the rules and consequences. Thus the child has the chance to behave accordingly or understand why the negative consequences are applied. It shall not base on guilt and aggression.... It should rather be an agreement and the child should have the option before to present the crucial situation from his point of view and to explain him self.
- B) The consequence needs to be related to the rejected behavior.
- C) It needs to be respectful towards the dignity of the child and
- D) It should be reasonable in its severity.

For example, when a child writes on a desk, it is easy to conclude the related consequence would be to have the child clean up the desk. But what happens if the other criteria are missing? If a teacher is not respectful and adds humiliation to his/her request to clean the desk or if a teacher is not reasonable and requests that the student cleans every desk in the room to make sure that the child has learnt her/his lesson? The aim is not to misuse your power and to ensure suffering. Thus would lead to resentment, revenge and retreat of the student.

The consequences should be expressed in a calm manner. This is possible since the consequences have been agreed in advance.

It is important to stress the specific behavior as unacceptable – not the person. For example, specify, “hitting is not ok because it hurts other people”, rather than saying, “you’re just a mean bully”.

The differences between Assertive Discipline and Physical and Psychological Punishment:

Assertive Discipline	Physical and Psychological Punishment
It includes non-violent forms of punishment Never includes forms of violence.	It is a physical or psychological form of violence
Questions the action, never the person	Produces fear and obligation to obey. Questions the person's dignity
Children participate as much as possible, and at least they are informed of the norms and the consequences.	It teaches children that people who love them hurt them (link between love and violence) and people who have authority can abuse it (link between authority and violence)
Leads to self control- enhances self- esteem	Undermines independence- defeats self- esteem
Fosters child's ability to think	Thinks and decides for the child
It is related to the wrong behavior and guides to shape behavior (develop a positive	It does not offer learning of an alternative behavior. Insists on obedience only.

behavior). Sets examples to follow	
It is not imposed with authority It is always thought out and planned. Helps children change	It never includes child participation It is faster and easier. Is an adult release

5.1) Establishing norms and limits in families and schools

To guide parents how to encourage childrens cooperation with the school:

- Support school rules at home.
- Establish a code of conduct in the home.
- Make sure child is fed and rested before leaving for school.
- Ask child/ show interest for the day's activities at school.
- Provide facilities and space to do homework.
- Have child read homework assignments aloud.
- Go to school meetings and express opinions and concerns.
- Encourage children to cooperate with school authorities and to be positive in their attitude to learning.

Some general tips for positive parenting:

Norms and limits in families should be enforced in a positive way which reaffirms the self-confidence of the child.

- 1- The home environment should be as much as possible 'child-friendly' (no danger or temptation). Provide consistency, structure, continuity, and predictability in children's lives.
- 2- Make sure that the children know what they are doing and what is expected of them. Set firm, consistent, age-appropriate, and acceptable limits.
- 3- Help them to make and keep a few simple, positive rules, e.g. "In our home we share our toys".
- 4- Reason and talk with children in age-appropriate ways. Verbal parent-child interactions enhance children's cognitive ability.
- 5- Model patience, kindness, empathy, and cooperation.
- 6- Concentrate on noticing the 'good' behavior or work in your child. (Catch them being 'good'). Try to praise quickly and consistently. A nonverbal response such as a smile or a nod, or a verbal response such as "good" or "right" not only provides incentives for accomplishment, but also builds primary grade children's confidence.
- 7- As far as possible ignore 'bad' behavior (try not to nag).
- 8- Make sure your child knows exactly what behavior he/she is being praised for by completing the sentence, e.g. "Well done, you have tied your shoe laces".
- 9- Let your child know that you always love them and still like them even if you condemned a conduct.
- 10- Build treats into your day as rewards for especially 'good' behavior. With younger children, corrections or explanations should be done immediately; as they will not be able to relate to the incident if the correction is done much later. Give short and clear reasons. As the children get older, make increasing use of reasoning.
- 11- Provide daily opportunities and help them to practice rational problem solving concerning daily life matters.
- 12- Encourage children's autonomy-allow them to think for themselves, and to monitor their own behavior, letting their conscience guide them.

5.2) Establishing norms and limits in schools

Through day to day school management and teaching practices, schools can promote and reinforce the values of respect, equality, inclusion, co-operation, participation, responsibility and conflict-resolution.

Alternatively, school practices, even if un-intentionally, may reinforce the values of: competition, exclusion, violence and discrimination.

How teachers can encourage to cooperation in school:

- Discipline from-, in- and through a spirit of love! Teachers should be firm but also sympathetic. If these qualities are shown, the learner will feel secure, safe and trusting with his mentor.
- Use humor as a regular part of teaching methods- not sarcasm or ridicule.
- Show respect and trust towards learners as well as others (teachers/parents).
- Maintain a dialogue with the learner.
- Be clear and consistent in discipline policy.
- Discuss rules and regulations during the first week of class, and reach agreement as to why rules are necessary, as well as the consequences of breaking the rules.
- Provide a positive, disciplined role model as much as possible. – be well organized, - arrive on time, - have a well-prepared lesson, - stay after class or allow time after class to deal with any problem, - come to school sober and rested.
- Learn the students' names and address them by their name.
- Be supportive. Praise good efforts as well as good work.
- Never show favoritism. Treat everyone equally and fairly.

Some general useful techniques for classroom management:

1. **Focusing:** The teacher should have everyone's attention in the classroom before he or she starts the lesson. Don't attempt to teach over the chatter of students who are not paying attention.

Inexperienced teachers sometimes think that by beginning their lesson, the class will settle down. Sometimes this works, but the children are also going to think that the teacher does not mind talking while they talk, or that the teacher is willing to speak louder so that they can finish their conversation even after the lesson has started. Some experienced teachers punctuate their waiting by extending it three to five seconds after the classroom is completely quiet. Then they begin their lesson using a quieter voice than normal.

2. **Direct Instruction:** Uncertainty increases the level of excitement in the classroom. The technique of direct instruction is to begin each class by telling the students exactly what will be happening. The teacher outlines what he/she and the students will be doing in the period.

3. **Monitoring:** The key to this principle is to circulate. Teachers should get up and get around the room. While the students are working, make rounds. Check on their progress. The teacher uses a quiet voice to appreciate with his personal and positive attention.

4. **Modeling:** There is a saying that goes, "Values are caught, not taught." Teachers who are courteous, prompt, enthusiastic, in control, patient and organized provide examples for their students through their own behavior.

5. **Low-Profile Intervention:** Most students are sent to the principal's office as a result of confrontational escalation. Much of this can be avoided by anticipating problems before they occur. For ex. while lecturing to the class the teacher can make effectively

use of name-dropping. If he sees a student talking or off task, he simply drops the youngster's name into his dialogue "And you see, Manju, here we can demonstrate how the car functions." Manju hears his name and is drawn back on task. The rest of the class does not seem to notice.

6. Assertive Discipline: This is more authoritarian, but will include a good mix of praise. The teacher is the boss and no child has the right to interfere with the learning of any student. Clear rules are laid out and consistently enforced. Give assertive I-Messages when confronting a student who is misbehaving. They are intended to be clear descriptions of what the student is supposed to do. Get the child's attention first and lead it to focus foremost on the behavior you want, not on the misbehavior. "I want you to..." or "I need you to..." or "I expect you to..."

7. Humanistic I-Messages: These I-messages are expressions of our feelings and need to be structured in three parts. First, include a description of the child's behavior. "When you talk while I talk..." Second, relate the effect this behavior has on the teacher. "...I have to stop my teaching...". And third, let the student know the feeling that it generates in the teacher. "...which frustrates me and I want you to....".

8. Positive Reinforcement: Use classroom rules that describe the behaviors that are desirable:

Instead of: "no running in the room!" use: "move through the building in an orderly manner!"

Instead of: "no fighting" use: "settle conflicts appropriately!"

Instead of "no gum chewing" use "leave gum at home!"

Let the students know this is how they are expected to behave in the classroom.

6) Special focus on aggressive behavior

Prevention of aggressive behavior

1. Before: avoid interaction which could lead to problems (focusing on the cause of aggression).
2. When problems already started of: prevent the acceleration by changing the trigger:
3. Therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions to avoid aggressive ways of solution:
 1. affect control, 2. solution orientation, 3. teach active listening and to communicate own feelings, 6. paradox intervention, 7. set limits like "radical acceptance", 8. strengthen social skills and individual identity.
4. Guide children to train their frustration tolerance for example through changing of cognitive beliefs like: "nobody is aloud to say anything wrong about me" into "take it cool, people talk a lot"
5. The model persons should condemn consequently aggressive behavior and not to act them selves aggressively.
6. Encourage/ affirm non-aggressive behavior
7. Children should have the possibility to have a constructive ambience to play (facilities) to let out energy

Managing aggressive behavior

- Revenge can lead to catharsis but it can keep the anger also alive. The practice of other expressive methods to letting the anger out (e.g. punching a pillow) can also keep the anger alive and are them selves aggressive behaviors (research by Nolting).

- Alternative action: letting the anger go for example through breathing exercise or observing it as a wave which strands. After becoming relatively calm...use of constructive conflict resolution methods and assertive communication skills.
- 3 reasons why people don't act aggressively: a. empathic feelings with the victim b. Fear of punishment or negative consequences, c. internalized values and moral attitudes. Encourage and guide children to develop the first (a.) and the last (c.)

How to face aggressive behavior of children?

When a child or an adult chooses aggressiveness as a way out of a conflict, as we all do occasionally, we should be able to provide a constructive and positive reply. Managing aggressiveness means to arrive at a point where we are able to solve a conflict calmly and effectively:

- Accept that the child is irritated and demonstrate that we understand him/her.
- ...but stop the child consequently from not acceptable behavior like screaming too practicing self harm or violence towards others.
- If possible, politely show the child to a private area and sit down to talk more calmly.
- Listen attentively. Before answering, wait until the child expresses his/her irritation.
- Keep a quiet tone of voice and speak softly.
- Reserve at first one's own judgments about what should and should not be done by the angry child.
- Help the other to face the situation once he/she realizes his erroneous behavior.
- Encourage and guide the child to find his/ her way to handle the problem.

Guidance and Counselling Unit, May 2008

National Institute of Education

Maharagama