

Ep #30 Difference between consequence and punishment

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This is episode 30. Let's get started.

Today we're talking about punishment versus teaching.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your parenting coach, Siope Kinikini.

I'm excited about the topic today, and yet at the same time, it's brought up a lot of past memories for me on things that I worked on throughout my career. I'll explain a little bit more about that, but today our topic is on [consequences and punishments](#), teaching versus punishing, positive discipline for kids, Effective Negative Rewards, elements of the Teaching-Family Model. All of those kind of kind of combined into one.

Now, I've kind of ramble those off really fast, but I am going to cover those, just so we are very clear. But I do want to explain a little bit about my background and what I've done in the past so you can understand why this is such an important topic. Specifically for children with ADHD, because the tendency towards parents who have children who struggle with issues like ADHD, or with anxiety or depression, is that when the child is not functioning or not doing well, we tend to resort to punishment in order to help them understand that there are consequences to their behavior. I'm here to tell you that there is a difference between punishing a child and teaching a child and that one is highly more effective than the other one. In fact, you want to avoid the punishment side of it.

Let me jump back so you can understand where I'm coming from and it makes sense to you. Because I'm sure a lot of red flags just kind of flew up in your head, and it's like, "What, punishment doesn't work? What?" Punishment does have an effect, but it's something that we may not necessarily want in the long run.

Okay, I'm going to backtrack. I'm going to turn the clock back in time. When I was new into this field, I began working with families in great distress and great need. The families that were

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referred to me were families that were in the court system. And the danger was that if the family was unable to learn the skills necessary, the parents were unable to parent their child, if they did not learn the skills necessary for them to be successful, then the child, or their children, would be removed from the home until the parents could figure it out. So I worked with a lot of families on this kind of tipping point. Either they got their act together and they kept their children or they didn't, and then their child were removed for a time while additional support was brought in in order to help reunite the family.

The goal was to keep the family together, and there's a lot of reasons why that's super important. Because it's traumatic for a child to be removed from the parent and then to be shuffled around in a system, and then trying to introduce them back into their family. So that was the goal, and that was a population that I worked with. I worked with them for over 12 years in that very specific fit. I worked with families from all over the world. I speak Spanish. I'm fluent in Spanish, and so if you speak Spanish, "Hola! Comma esta."

I also speak a Pacific Islander language called Tongan, which is what I am. So I worked with families there, and with ASL, so families who used American Sign Language. I worked with those families, families that spoke English as well. And dynamically what I had observed over the time when the very first lessons that we went over for parents was the difference between teaching their child and punishing their child for things that they needed to be corrected on, right?

Because we needed parents to parent. We needed parents to be able to set good boundaries and help their children be successful. Usually, what was happening is the child was just running wild and the parent didn't intercede or didn't act on what needed to be done. This is the very first lesson. It's kind of like the rudimentary thing that we went through, the difference between teaching and punishment.

So what is the difference between the two? The difference is that punishment is focused on fear. Now I want you to think about that. It's focused on fear. I used to love to watch this show called Cops. I don't know if you all have seen that. You know, bad boys, bad boys. I used to watch it. I know it's such a weird show. It's not been on the air forever, but it operated on this idea that people were scared of being arrested and scared of going to jail and scared of all these things that may occur to them, right? That is one way to approach life.

Now for a young child to operate in this realm of fear, it actually is paralyzing to them, right? It's paralyzing. And it actually can cause some additional issues to come in later in life when they are just terrified to act. Or they operate on this idea of everyone's out to get me and, and there's nobody, I can't trust anybody. That's what I found with the families that I was working with. When the parents did implement some type of consequence, it was usually in this area of fear. Some families were, "If you don't stop that, I'm going to come over there and take off my belt, and I will whip you." Right? Yeah. I do not condone that at all. But, again, that is operating in an area of fear, which is not helpful for a child.

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In the area of teaching, that operates in an area of possibilities, in looking on: "What can I do to address this in the future better than I have now?" Right? So it's future thinking and it opens up this idea that your child can make decisions and choices. Teaching helps them understand what to do next time this behavior happens. In teaching these concepts, and I had mentioned that I work with different cultures because different cultures raise children differently, right? There's different expectations in the cultures on how to work with your children.

I have found that when I start teaching this concept, everyone gravitated towards it because they got it, they understood it. Did they always agree with it? I don't know. But they were able to implement this idea that, "Hey, I don't want my child to live in fear of me. I don't want my child to operate in this space of fear because everything is about punishing. I want to help them learn a better way, and from learning it, they can behave a better way." Right?

So that's the difference between the two, and I think it's super important that parents understand the difference between the two. Now, teaching takes more time. I will say that. However, the time that you're spending upfront to do a teaching interaction or do something that is helping your child learn a new way of being is actually less time than it is when you're operating in an area of fear, and later on you're trying to develop a relationship with them or have some positive interaction with them, right?

In the families that I worked with where there have been these problems, sometimes we'd go back and we would evaluate how they were raised, and often it was in an area of fear. They were scared that their parents would give them some type of punishment, and so they behaved a certain way. That does work in some ways, but it's not helpful for a happy relationship with your child. I think it's safe to say that parents do want to have a good relationship with their child. They don't want their child living in fear. Who does? And children shouldn't have to live in fear, right?

Now, am I anti-prison? Absolutely not. I guess what I'm saying is in this case, that's why we have laws that are different for children and for adults. When a child commits a crime and is involved in the court system, there is more teaching going on in order to help the child recover and become a successful adult. When you become an adult, the expectation is you know right from wrong, and if you don't do the right thing, then there is a punishment for it. I mean, even understand that our system, the way that it's structured, is on this teaching when you're young and then punishment when you're old. I kind of wish we would bleed over a little bit of the teaching into the older part. I think that there are some elements of that inside the corrections for adults, but not always. Not always.

So, anyways, now when you're using teaching, what it also does, I'm going to list these, is it models good behavior, you are positive throughout the interaction, and it opens up possibilities, and it helps your child evaluate what's right and what's wrong. Now, if your child is operating in an area of fear, it could actually lead to some mental disorders. Emotion dysregulation, they can

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have self-esteem issues. They can become either bullies or victims of bullies in the future, and usually, kids struggle with academic performance. So through the punishment, right?

We want to always focus our area on teaching. We want to be able to teach positive behaviors. What does this look like? What does it look like to teach? If somebody presented me with a behavior, for example, there was a family that I was working with where the behavior was the child would not do their chores. Just wouldn't do them, right? So the parent threatened to whip them with a belt in order to get them to do their chores. So we implemented quite a few different strategies in order to help the child comply with what they needed to do. We did not move into the area of having the child scared of the parent.

That included the parents sitting down with the child. What we did was we made a list, and you can find a way to do this on the Smarter Parenting website. We have so many skills over there that would be super helpful for you. But we adapted it, and it's really cute way that we did it. What we did is we had the expectation of the child doing the chores, and we gave it a very specific time on when it needed to be done. It needed to be done right after dinner. Then we listed off for the child some of the positive rewards that they could receive if they did that, and we listed three or four. Then underneath that, the parent put down a consequence if they were unable to follow through with it, and that's something that the parent chose.

The first three or four things that were rewards were determined by the child, and they fit appropriately with the task of doing the chores, meaning it wasn't over extravagant. It wasn't this amazing reward, but it was enough to match what they expect their child to do. Then the parent actually chose what the consequence was. And when the child actually saw that, they actually were more motivated to do the dishes because they noticed, "Oh, there are a couple of rewards." Now the child could only choose one of the rewards. I think one of them was stay up a little bit later at night after bedtime. They could stay for an additional 15 minutes, and then another one was they were able to stay up and have a dessert with parents, some ice cream. I'm always good for ice cream. Stay up with the parents and have some ice cream.

They saw those and they're like, "Wow, if I do that, I have a lot more positive choices to make. And if I don't, then I have this consequence that I need to follow through with." What we found is that the child actually was more motivated to do the dishes and follow through with the chores by implementing this. Now, this was not about punishing the child for not doing it. It's about finding creative ways to teach our child that when you do the right things, good things will happen, and there's a lot more good than there is negative when you do the right things.

That's an example, at least, one of the examples that I remember from a family that I worked with that would be super helpful probably for another family to try. But there are some additional ways to do this. You don't have to do it that way. Obviously, there are multiple ways to teach. You'll find that the skills that you find on the Smarter Parenting website are all about teaching. And they teach some very specific things, like how to make good decisions, excuse me... how to

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make good decisions, how to effectively communicate. I mean, there's quite a few different things that are on there that you can teach your child to do, and help your child with that.

Back to the punishing and the teaching. You do have to ask yourself the question: When I'm raising my child and I'm giving them a consequence if they're not following through with behaviors, am I teaching them or am I punishing them with my behavior? And if I'm punishing them, do I want them to fear me? Do I want them to have this idea that fear is the way that they should navigate through the world? Or am I teaching them to become independent and successful and resilient people who can notice the good and act on their own, motivated by their own values?

Those are the questions. Now in working with the different families that I've worked with over the years, this concept, even multiculturally, made sense to all of them. They were like, "No, I want my child to love me." I think that's a kind of a universal thing. "I want my child to respect me. I want my child to be successful and independent." And so we worked from that framework. Okay. Well, when things happen, we have to always be in the mindset of, we just need to teach to this. We don't need a punishment. We don't need to be angry. We just need to understand our child doesn't understand this and now we have to teach them. Sometimes we'd have to teach them more than one, sometimes three, four, five times. It would take a while for them to get at, but we remained in that sphere of teaching. That's where we wanted to be, right?

So that's the difference between the two, teaching and punishment. Really, you need to focus on the teaching, people. You need to focus on the teaching. Teaching is where it's at, and you will receive benefits from it in the long run: create a relationship, trust, independence. I mean, all those wonderful things, and it will give your child more value, self-esteem in their ability to make choices on their own, and in order to address difficulties as they come up. It creates this sense of resiliency in children as well.

That is it for me. There's some downloadable materials that you can get regarding this podcast. Love to share it with you, of course, for free. The skills on the Smarter Parenting website are for free as well. If you are struggling with a very specific issue or you want to address some very specific things with your child who's struggling with ADHD, feel free to contact us. We have ADHD, Smarter Parenting coaching that is available, and we can coach you through whatever issue it is that you are working through and guide you along the process to help you.

I'm so grateful for this opportunity to be here and to be sharing this information and especially to be sharing it for free, right? Because who does that anymore? There's always like this catch. For us, we just want to help. We really want to help. And so I am here to do this as long as possible in order to help as many families as possible.

That's it for me. I will see you again next week, and tune in. Looking forward to seeing you again. All right. Bye.

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Resources mentioned in this podcast

[Free 15-minute ADHD Coaching mini-session](#)

[The difference between consequences and punishments](#)

[How to teach your children consequences](#)

[Do consequences really work?](#)

[How to get your children to do what you want without punishment](#)

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