

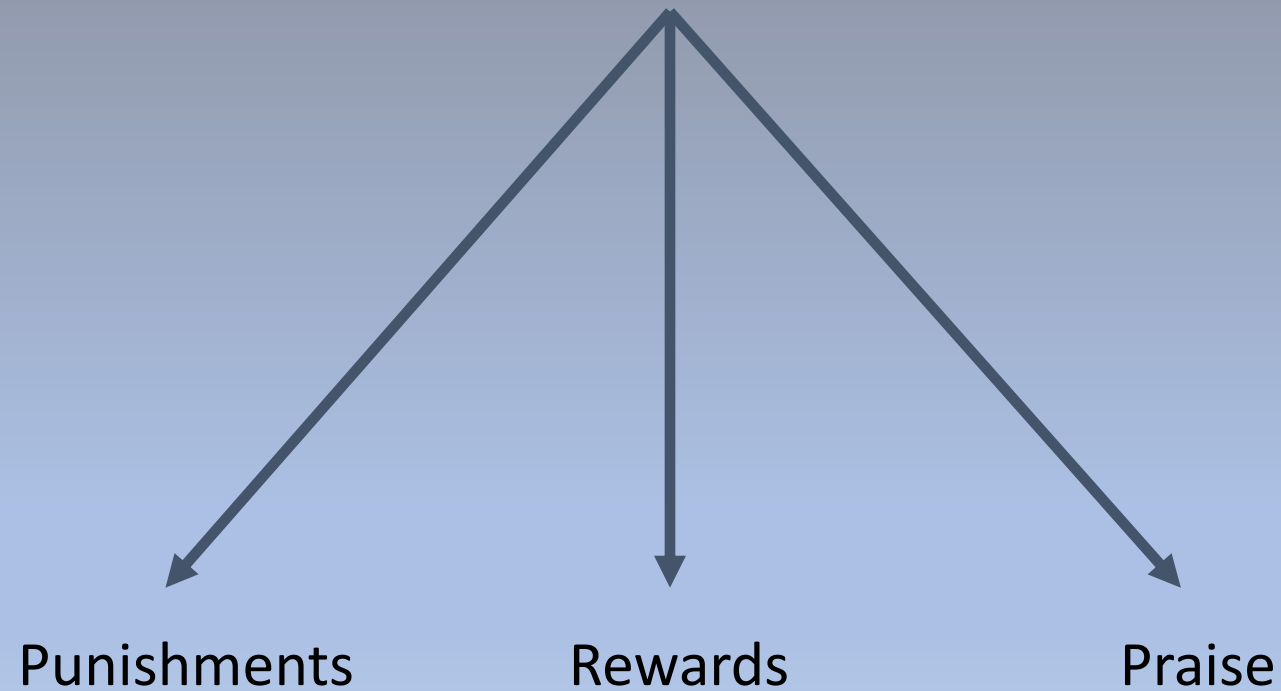
Encouragement over praise

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Learning steps

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Encouragement over Praise



“Anyone who has ever achieved something great or done something successful has never done it because they were attracted by a reward or they had a fear of punishment.” Every advancement in human progress and every victory has been a result of an inner compulsion or drive”.

Maria Montessori

Punishment may have temporary short-term effects and it can also produce severe negative effects including, but not limited to:

Resentment

- The child become more rebellious in nature
- Lying and hiding to escape punishment

Retreat

- Low self-esteem

Retaliate

- Rude behaviour to parents and other authority figures

Revenge

- Power struggles between parent and child or between other authority figures and child





However we now know that:

- Children below the age of 6yrs are still working on developing obedience and it is cruel to punish them.

Therefore, we need to see things from the child's perspective.

- Disruptive behaviour is usually a result of constructive energy being diverted from a creative activity. Furthermore, misbehaving is often a call for help or some added adult encouragement and understanding.

Therefore, we need to check for the immediate need.

Rewards & Punishments

Montessori shares her own experience

“I had been subject to the delusion of one of the most absurd procedures of ordinary education. Like others I had believed that it was necessary to encourage a child by means of some exterior reward that would flatter his baser sentiments such as gluttony, vanity, or self-love, in order to foster in him a spirit of work and of peace. And I was astonished when I learned that a child who is permitted to educate himself really gives up these lower instincts. I then urged the teachers to cease handing out the ordinary prizes and punishments, which were no longer suited to our children, and to confine themselves to directing them gently in their work”.

Montessori's experience

Montessori cites a classroom incident where 1 child was sitting in an armchair in the middle of the room while another, wearing a large silver cross was carrying objects from 1 table to another. He was busy and intent on his work. He passed in front of the seated boy many times and at one point his cross fell to the floor. The seated boy picked up the cross saying, *"Do you see what you dropped"?*

The child turned and looked then said, *"What difference is it to me?"*

So, the seated boy said, *"In that case, I'll put it on".*

The pendant could satisfy the child who was being punished but not the active child content with his work.





- Montessori's experience clearly illustrates that a young child has an intrinsic desire to strive and thrive thus a natural tendency to work from his/her inner motivation which brings satisfaction.
- Similar observations were made by psychologists in the 1970s following their studies on children. *'Undermining Children's Intrinsic Interest with Extrinsic Rewards'* by Mark Lepper.
- Coloured markers – interestingly, teachers of young children agreed with the results saying *"it was long overdue"*. On the other hand, teachers of older children commented that *"While this is important information, it is irrelevant to our class situations, as students rarely indicate intrinsic motivation"*.
- University students often choose subject most likely to bring high grades over a more challenging subject.

- Some time ago, as a reasonable option to corporal or demeaning punishments, the "*time-out*" method became the discipline of choice.
- This prevalent form of discipline makes a child experience a feeling of rejection and learn that love will be withdrawn if she does not conform to our wishes.
- When using such methods to develop discipline, we are ultimately forcing the child to form disguises to mask his wrong doings.
 - Long term, he learns to avoid punishment by lying in order to protect himself.
 - By 'behaving' simply to meet our requirements the child never learns to self-correct.
 - At some point, the child will take out all that he had hidden in fear of adults.
 - Therefore, "*time-out*" is basically exclusion and therefore punishment.

Assisting Self-Discipline

- Discipline is about teaching, not punishing.
- Rather than exclude a child, we want to encourage the development of empathy and insight.
- We want to set clear limits while helping empower children to understand and collaborate with us so that respect flows in both directions.

So, when the going gets tough.....



- Calling attention to the child's physical state/expression can help child redirect their attention.
- Encouraging a child to verbalize feelings often is enough for her to continue to problem solve.
- Sometimes physical holding is necessary to stop a tantrum and help a child learn to self-soothe.

Remember that the children aren't giving us a hard time

– ***They're having a hard time!***

- Parents should not own the situation but guide child to find his balance.
- Child needs to own the situation he has created.
- It may be time to move the goalposts and adjust to the child's present needs.
- We can do this by inviting the child to express himself, asks questions and prompt suggestions so that you can come to an agreement which is feasible and suitable/acceptable for all parties.
- We're teaching the child life skills so that he may become an independent and self-reliant adult with a generous spirit.

Changing *Time-Out* to *Time-In*

We want to convey love and respect, letting children know it is the behaviour we want to change, not the child. “*Time-in*” means we know where the child is developmentally and can intervene before the child seriously misbehaves. If you stay calm and spend “*time-in*” with your child, both of you will feel more secure and in control.

These ideas may help:

- Anticipate and prepare for challenging situations. Have appropriate expectations for your child's behaviour based on his age and abilities. Be willing to adjust your plans accordingly.
- Take games or quiet activities for those wiggly waiting times in the doctor's office, a restaurant, or on the airplane.
- Support your child by explaining the reasons for requests. Make clear brief explanations appropriate to the child's age.
- Spend 5 to 10 minutes with a young child when you notice frustration developing. Change the activity or just assist in making it easier to handle.

- Point out Natural consequences remembering to avoid disdain, criticism or threats.

“You need to clean up the table/the table needs cleaning so you can eat”.

- Reinforce the idea that their actions have an impact and a consequence.
- If a natural consequence is not obvious, we can introduce a logical consequence.
- Remember that the children aren't giving us a hard time

– **They're having a hard time!**

Praise

- A common practice today is to employ praise as a form of encouragement. We often hear adults use rote responses such as:
 - 'Great job!'
 - 'Beautiful!'
 - 'Well done!'
- These phrases, while said with good intentions give very little acknowledgement of what went into accomplishing the 'job.'
 - Similar to every child getting a trophy whether the team wins or loses, this empty praise may discourage children from trying new activities at which they might fail.
 - They also may get an inflated sense of self-importance and entitlement.
- The adult becomes the judge, and motivation becomes external rather than internal. This "conditional parenting" teaches children to behave in a certain way in order to be loved. It becomes another method of control, just like punishment.

We can communicate with children in ways that help them feel more secure and independent.

- Acknowledge the child's effort and or feelings. Talk about specifics:
 - *"That picture has so much red colour."*
 - *"Can you show me how you did that?"*
 - *"How did you get all those details/what colours did you use?"*
- Encourage persistence and hard work:
 - *"You sounded out that word all by yourself."*
 - *"You tried really hard to make that goal in football."*
 - *"Did you do that all by yourself?"*
 - *"You must be proud of yourself."*

- Discuss/mention the positive effect of completing a task
 - “Thank you for helping/ making your bed. Now we have more time for our walk today”.
- Solicit the child's thoughts and feelings
 - *“What did you do when you spilled the tray of food?”*
 - *“How did you feel when you dropped the glasss?”*

A child who develops internal motivation learns to push harder and to celebrate victories.



At the same time, he learns to acknowledge his shortcomings and that it's alright to make mistakes.

To Sum Up

- I. Intrinsic motivation = self/internal
- II. Extrinsic motivation = others/external
- III. Want to learn and be helpful
- IV. Rewards distract from internal joy
- V. Intrinsic motivation leads to collaboration, creativity and perseverance

Praise:

- Form of extrinsic motivation
- Alternatives
- How do you feel about it?
- State our own feelings
- Highlight cause and effect
- Recognize effort

Points to remember

- **CELEBRATE** your own achievements/successes no matter how small – sets example for child to follow
- Congratulate and or praise yourself
- Logical rewards
- Logical consequences
- Avoid rewards for things that children are already intrinsically capable of doing
- Use material rewards sparingly
- Engage child to make chart

Look to the Child

What are reasonable expectations? Psychologist Madeline Levine reminds us that “*the happiest, most successful children have parents who do not do for them what they are capable of doing*”. This leads to independence and a strong sense of self-esteem. We need to *stand back* while they figure out things on their own. We, as parents can give up *judging* ourselves when our children don't live up to our expectations. We can instill positive values and encourage persistence while *watching* our children learn from the normal challenges in life.



Photo by Dan Rossini