

My Two Cents:

Where Does Discipline End and Abuse Begin?

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“What is happening to our world?” “The world is going to hell in a hand basket!” “This generation is going to pot!” If these quotes sound familiar, you just might be of the *baby boomer generation*. Or, you could be the offspring of the *baby boomers*.

Or, could it be that each generation has been saying similar comments about the following generation throughout the history of mankind?

I wonder what Adam and Eave said about the generation following them? It is hard to imagine they could have thought any following generation could mess up things more than they. That alone should reassure most of us that our generations have not been any worse than those preceding us.

But, do we, as a society, want to be complacent with the realization that there have been worse generations? I think not.

We often tell our children, if you are a teacher—maybe your students—“It won’t be long before you will be in charge of...” Then we go on to tell them we hope they do a better job at running...than we have....

While it is true that, next to Jesus Christ, our children are the key to the success or failure of our society, I pose this question for you. If we truly do expect our children, or following generations to do a better job, what tools are we giving them to do so?

I once witnessed a scene where a young man spoke to his principal in such a manner that it repulsed me. It is my contention that without discipline no organization will ever realize any great measure of success. It seems that parents no longer teach children basic respect for their elders.

Where does discipline start? It, or the lack of it, always starts in the home. So, what is discipline? I think we can all agree that it is a reflection of what is acceptable behavior for the organization in which we are members.

In various families it may be acceptable to spank a child regardless of age to enforce discipline. In some families it may not be acceptable to spank, even with the hand, at any age.

As a teacher, I can tell you that the students who act out the most are often the ones whose parent/parents use excessive violence when correcting. That is often the only time the child ever receives any notice from that parent.

There are other students who never get corrected and it becomes obvious, when dealing with student and parent, the student runs the household. Then there are those who are corrected only by one of two parents. The other, usually the mother, is looked upon by the child as someone he/she can ignore and routinely disrespect.

You may say, “Well there are extremes in all situations.” And, you would be correct in so stating.

Disciplining—notice, I did not say punishment—can come in various formats. I’m not opposed to spanking at young ages or getting physical when the child is older and is going out of the house regardless of what you say and proceeds to try to walk over you. However, I do believe that if a child is brought up correctly that will never or rarely be the case.

You have heard it time and again; communication is the key. How we communicate or fail to communicate with our children will often determine if he/she is a sneaky, quarrelsome, or pleasant person with whom to deal.

I’ve often heard, “I may not give my children a lot of time, but the time I do give is quality.” That is a copout and most folks who use it know it to be a copout. There is no quality time without quantity. And most of us have much more than we are willing to give.

How many times have you come home and sit down on the couch in front of the TV and told the kid/s to leave you alone, later, too tired???

Have you ever got up and spent time actually engaged in an activity with them only to realize that all it took was getting up and you were not as tired as you had initially felt? Often that is all the child wants, is just a few moments and he is totally satisfied that you came downstairs to his playroom and engaged in a game just for a few moments.

But, we have not, yet, answered the initial question. **Where Does Discipline End and Abuse Begin?**



Because I believe that a healthy body can promote a healthy mind, and discipline is necessary for a viable society, I’ve had a standing policy in my classroom. If a student does something relatively minor, I sometimes offer him/her a choice between being referred to the office and doing a number of pushups. Most students, most of the time will take the pushups.

I’ve had some who I felt were not likely going to be able to do the minimum of 10 and they have as much as told me so. I’ve allowed them to do pushups on their knees.

Now, does this constitute corporal punishment? Some believe it does. Webster says corporal punishment is punishment inflicted directly to the body. It then gives an example of flogging.

In every discussion I’ve heard or seen written about the subject, that is what all have implied. However, that is not the case. Giving students laps, or pushups, as a form of discipline/punishment, has been determined by the State of Texas to be corporal punishment.

While I do feel that most of us should get more exercise than we do and a few pushups never hurt anyone, what about giving the student the choice of referral to the office and pushups? I’ve had students actually want to show me how many and how well they could do pushups.

That be as it may, I know of a recent case where administrators and a coach were disciplined because the coach administered excessive pushups. So, if in doubt, don’t do it.

What is next you might ask? Where is our society headed? Do I feel that giving students a choice between pushups or laps or going to the office for suspension is wrong? No, I don’t. Do I want to be disciplined for doing so? Again, the answer, of course, is no. Do I consider fifty pushups abusive? No, I think most healthy young males should be able to do fifty in just a few seconds. But, that is just my “Two Cents” it is not the law. Is this world going to hell in a hand basket? You decide; just don’t abuse the child.