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DISCIPLINE

Today there are two matters that especially influence a child's attitude about discipline:

- a particularly strong emphasis on human dignity by politicians, sociologists, psychologists, educationists, the media (Television, Radio, Journals, Newspapers) and a Bill of Human Rights that now is being developed [in South Africa].
- an excessive emphasis on the rights of a child, especially in certain television programs from American, without clearly indicating that he also has duties and obligations.

For the teacher and parent this means that discipline must be applied with extreme sensitivity. That there must be discipline cannot be doubted because its lack leads to uncertainty in a child that can restrain or even derail his becoming a proper adult.

The sensitive handling of discipline means that a teacher or parent must meet certain demands as a person:

1. An adult who wants to exercise discipline must be a balanced person. This means that he (or she) must be able to do the following:
 - make decisions calmly and firmly and remain consistent with them. Calmness creates trust and firmness allows a child to feel secure, and a child who feels safe (secure) is thankful.
 - shouting, name-calling and humiliating comments must be avoided because they undermine a child's self-image and awaken anxiety in him. Also a child experiences this (quite

¹ <http://www.landmanwa.co.za/voordragte.htm> (No date) [Translated in 2004]. English translation available at: <http://www.landmanwa.co.za/discipline.htm>

directly) as evidence of an adult's impotence. These experiences lead to distrust and feelings of insecurity that encourage disobedience.

2. An adult must demonstrate goodwill. This is because a child is receptive to the discipline of a friendly person that he accepts, i.e., who lets him feel at home and welcome. Thus, an adult should not give a "sermon" because this destroys communication and elicits opposition that, in turn, feeds anxiety.
3. An adult must be able to create order.
 - He sets demands in a calm manner without resorting to threats that are not feasible. He must know precisely what demands can be justifiably set. He must be able to clarify the demands he asks of a child in a conversation with him and he must not expect the impossible because then he asks for resistance. He must continually keep in mind that a child is not an adult.
 - He does not give "final warnings" that cannot be kept, especially "final warnings" that include words such as breaking one's neck, beating to death, mutilating and destroying. "Final warnings" are expressions of impotence that awaken insecurity.
 - He does not fall into fits of anger. The younger child becomes insecure by this and the older child experiences such an adult as immature. Calm, suitable words are decisive. Only a sufficient number of words should be used because a flood of words breaks off communication and awakens anxiety.
 - He does not set too many prescriptions and rules because such excess creates confusion. When a child does something that is wrong, it must be explained to him why what he did is seen as improper. The adult must make sure that the child understands and also accepts his explanation.
4. If a teacher or adult feels the child's behavior is such that he must be punished, the following must be kept in mind:

- Punishment for the sake of making a child do something boring only gives rise to resistance.
 - Punishment out of retaliation is a crime. Therefore, it is wrong to set and apply a punishment when one is angry.
 - A reasonable excuse must be accepted as well as those apologies by which a child tries to correct his wrong behavior.
 - Physical punishment must be administered only for serious transgressions and it must be done prudently, with moderation and privately (the teacher in the presence of the principal and the parents but in the absence of brothers and sisters). Excess corporal punishment is an assault on a child!
5. The disciplined child is a child equipped to survive in contemporary society with its particular demands and negative influences. All normal persons have a desire to stay alive but especially to live meaningfully. This means that all of us are attuned to surviving all sorts of problems, limitations and threats.

A reflective person immediately asks about the conditions that must be met to survive meaningfully.

In the Republic of South Africa teachers can inspire their pupils to work on at least two conditions for survival:

- Discipline:

Life within the scope of school rules and the rules that parents set and can explicate leads to the preparation of good teachers who have at their disposal adequate knowledge of their subject and knowledge of educating that can play a key role in this. It is the parent who really is interested in the spiritual well being of his child who can exercise a positive and lasting influence on him.

- Achievement:

It is especially the Afrikaner who, because of his life- and world-view, is attuned to achievement. The fact that he is part of a particular minority group, i.e., a minority group upon which the ultimate survival of all sections of the population in the RSA depends, strengthens his achievement-consciousness. Teachers continually must encourage pupils to achieve maximally in accordance with their potentialities (talents).

Being disciplined and achievement-consciousness together form the foundation for survival in the new South Africa that now is developing.

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