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Because it doesn't work, that's why

by Linda M. Clement

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Discipline is NOT synonymous with punishment. Some choose the "tool" of punishment to accomplish the "result" of discipline. Some don't. "Discipline" is a context. "Punishment" is an action.

So says Cindy Bablitz, an Alberta writer/mom I know from a parents' email list. She, like me, is an Alfie Kohn fan.

In *Unconditional Parenting*, author Alfie Kohn cites study after study (many of which set out to prove the necessity and efficacy of spanking) demonstrating conclusively that punishment is not only ineffective in the long run –being far more likely to produce criminals, mental disorders and poor social adaptation– but also that punishment doesn't work in the short term. It has been proven in study after study: spanking immediately creates defiance, not obedience. It also eliminates creativity, bravery, curiosity and sociability creating passive, fearful children.

It is well known, that the root of the word discipline is connected to teaching and learning and not to punishment or cruelty, so I'll move on. It is ordinary for people to really, really believe that no one will ever choose to

do the right thing without being forced, coerced or 'trained' to it. Another woman on the same email list paralleled the common thought this way:

Do I like being hit? Nope. No one likes being hit. No one likes being told what to do either. No one likes having to drive 70km/h where it is much more fun to drive 110...

Sadly, this is locally topical again. Multiple-death traffic accidents, where drivers are obviously 'having fun,' have been in the media in a way I don't ever remember happening before. This is my response to her post:

I prefer driving 70 to slamming into a rock wall I couldn't see soon enough to react to. I definitely prefer it to running into an oncoming car that has just edged over the yellow line in a moment of inattention, or a pedestrian who didn't have time to react to my speed when I can't, either...

I understand the *reasons* behind the speed limits (road conditions, vehicle engineering, physics), so I don't find it 'fun' to speed under most driving conditions. First of all, there are far too many 'other' people on the road who are not as good at driving as they should be, not as attentive, busy having an argument with the kids in the backseat or enraged by the guy who cut them off 3 minutes ago, and all those distracted people are a real, ongoing danger.

I'd rather stay alert, give

myself time to respond to whatever weirdness they're going to perform in front of me, and get to my destination than go fast for 'fun'.

As I've said in other contexts, I don't 'not speed' because I'm avoiding a punishment (ticket, points, licence revocation). I don't speed because I understand the issue.

If I wanted an angry, resentful, defiant child, punishment is the way to go. If I wanted a child who resorted to violence whenever the world isn't going 'her way', spanking's a keeper. If I wanted to add my children to the many in the penitentiary, where 100% of the inmates report having been spanked regularly, well... the connection is obvious.

I want to raise self-aware adults with high self-esteem and a strong sense of their own capabilities. The reason I have chosen non-violent parenting is *because* spanking defeats my goal.

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