Discipline children with respect, not humiliation

With authority over children comes the responsibility to discipline children with respect. Sometimes we all feel a lack of respect for an irrational child with no concept of civility, but parents must remember to respect their children for who they will become, not what they are in the moment.

Because many teachers are often the first line of authority for children, sometimes there is a tendency to punish openly and publicly. In a recent classroom situation at a school, a little girl had drawn a picture of a tree house and swing on to her desk. As a result the student was disciplined with a trip to the office, no recess, and she was forced to clean the desk – the teacher *also* took the student's desk and chair away for the rest of the year. The student completed the school year using a clipboard as a desk and sitting on the floor instead of in a chair.

Of course the girl felt humiliated by the punishment. She was too scared to tell her parents about what the teacher did because she thought her mistake was so horrible she did not deserve the use of a desk any longer. Certainly she remembered the lesson learned, but there was also a great deal of other consequences incurred for the nature of the punishment – including the fact she felt inclined to lie about the punishment as well as never wanting to draw again.

Many authority figures discipline with fear, through force, or by punishment. However, this is not discipline by definition.

Discipline is the teaching or training of an individual to accomplish a goal.

The education of self-reliance, self-control and respect for themselves and others is taught to our children through discipline. Finding safe and humane ways of teaching our children is the difference between them offering respect and demanding respect.

How to discipline children with respect

Every parent should display and promote a rigid list of rules, and the consequences for breaking these rules. Parents should also have known tiers of severity for the consequences – from minor offenses to the most severe. By disclosing these rules and consequences in advance we are creating environments that are not going to sabotage our children with unknown or unexpected situations that result from their careless or overt acts. Then, enforce discipline with clarity, consistency and caring.

For example, creating a rule that simply states ***NO TALKING*** will be a rule that will certainly fail. Be sure to offer the children the ability to succeed. Instead, make the rule ***QUIET WHISPERS WILL BE TOLERATED***! Once a child understands where the boundaries are and what constitutes quiet, the inferences on the matter can be truer to the spirit of disciplining children with respect when the real infraction results – loudness.

Teachers are a valuable resource for understanding how to enforce rules. Teachers know children are unable to remember everything told to them. The idea "I'm only going to tell you once" does not

work; instead, teachers will often provide several learning opportunities. When the kids make mistakes repeatedly, offer them the chance at doing it over. Likewise, when creating the punishments there should be a first, second and third offense approach.

Transform their energy into positive effects

Have you heard the phrase *I wish I could bottle a little of that*? So many times as adults, we see all the energy our kids have and want some of it for ourselves. Parents should see that energy *superpower* as a way to encourage children. If a child is continually acting out in a certain way, then a teacher has the opportunity to put that energy to work. Things that we see to be problems could sometimes be the most enduring quality they will have.

For example, drawing on a desk may be a negative action because of a previously written rule on defacement of school property. However, take the student's desire for art and put it towards a positive outlet – or deny that outlet of art. That student who drew on her desk might be asked to put a picture on the board every morning. Alternatively, it could be a reward for completion of a positive day.

Leading by example is the best form of education we can offer our children. To be taught to punish with fear will help to teach that child to punish with fear as an adult. Giving respect also in turns teaches respect to our children.