

# Applying Natural and Logical Consequences; Acting—Not Reacting; and Selecting the Appropriate Approach

1. Parents' typical reactions often reinforce the children's goals of attention, power, revenge, or display of inadequacy. To remedy this, do the unexpected; practice the principle of "acting—not reacting."
2. When using natural or logical consequences, remember to remain calm, show good will, give choices, and be willing to accept the child's decision.
3. Three effective approaches to problems in parent-child relations are:
  - Reflective listening and exploring alternatives
  - I-messages
  - Natural and logical consequences
4. The approach you select will primarily depend upon who owns the problem.
5. Your choice of approach will also depend upon your estimate of the effectiveness of each approach with your own children.
6. Children will sometimes use and repeat problems to gain your attention or sympathy. If this occurs, discontinue reflective listening and exploring alternatives.
7. Overuse of I-messages may cause children to become tired of hearing about your feelings. They may stop listening or "trap" you into using I-messages to give them attention or to engage you in a power struggle.
8. Some things children do should be ignored. Ignoring is a form of a logical consequence.
9. As mutual respect is established and the relationship improves, you may not have to use consequences as frequently.
10. Encouragement is implicit in all these approaches. Each approach expresses acceptance of the child, faith in his or her ability to solve problems, and respect for the child.

# The Major Differences Between Punishment and Logical Consequences

## PUNISHMENT

## LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

| Characteristics  | Underlying Message to Child  | Likely Results  | Characteristics  | Underlying Message to Child                              | Likely Results   |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Emphasis on power of personal authority.                                    | "Do what I say because I say so."  | Rebellion.<br>Desire for revenge.<br>Lack of self-discipline.<br>Sneakiness.<br>Irresponsibility. | 1. Emphasis on reality of the social order.              | "I trust you to learn to respect the rights of others."  | Cooperation.<br>Respect for self and others.<br>Self-discipline.<br>Reliability. |
| 2. Rarely related to act; arbitrary.   | "I'll show you."<br>"You deserve what you're getting!"                             | Resentment.<br>Desire for revenge.<br>Fear.<br>Confusion.<br>Rebellion.                           | 2. Logically related to the misbehavior; sensible.       | "I trust you to make responsible choices."               | Learning from experience.  |
| 3. Implies moral judgment.   | "You're bad!<br>You're not acceptable."  | Feelings of hurt, guilt.<br>Desire to get even.   | 3. Treats person with dignity; separates deed from doer. | "You are a worthwhile person."                           | Senses he or she is acceptable even though behavior is not.                      |
| 4. Emphasis on past behavior.  | "You'll never learn."<br>"I can never count on you."                               | Feels unacceptable.<br>Feels can't make good decisions.   | 4. Concerned with present and future behavior.           | "You are able to take care of yourself."                 | Becomes self-evaluating, self-directing.   |
| 5. Threats of disrespect, violence, or loss of love, either open or concealed. | "You'd better shape up!"<br>"No child of mine would do a thing like that!"         | Fear.<br>Rebellion.<br>Guilt feelings.<br>Desire to "get back."                                   | 5. Voice communicates respect and good will.             | "I don't like what you are doing, but I still love you." | Feels secure about parent's love and support.                                    |
| 6. Demands compliance.   | "Your preferences don't matter."<br>"You can't be trusted to make wise decisions." | Rebellion.<br>"Defiant compliance."   | 6. Presents choice.                                      | "You are capable of deciding."                           | Responsible decisions.<br>Increased resourcefulness.                             |