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A HIERARCHY OF DISCIPLINE

Where do you start? Where do you end up?

This hierarchy of discipline seeks to be logical, to be careful of what the adult teaches when he/she disciplines, to be responsive to the child, and tries to give children responsibility but also attempts to keep the adult's responsibility to be the adult.

****It is very important to note that before any attempt at discipline, there needs to be CONNECTION. Being in tune to the feelings of the child and then validating him or her no matter the effects of his or her actions. The feelings of upsetness, of being wronged, of being angry are always real and valid TO THE CHILD, whether the circumstances and situation justify the actions and results or not. If you skip this connecting/validating process, NONE OF THE DISCIPLINE STEPS WILL BE REALLY ABSORBED BY THE CHILD!**

The first level- civilized: These principles need to be kept at the second and third levels as well. (This is most of us promise to do until we have real children to discipline).

Reason- logical, not arbitrary, considerate of child and others.

Expectations- trusts, values child's ability to be reasonable.

Parents/Teachers' Pleasure and Displeasure- works with the child's natural instinct to please those important to him/her.

The second level- creative/logical serving motivations:

Dependent on finding the individual key to situations and personalities; the adult needs to be creative; the child needs to feel the logic of the motivation in how it serves him/herself. Such logic is internal and self-serving for the child.

(hitting because s/he doesn't have a verbal way to communicate)

(telling the truth needs to be rewarded, not just lying punished)

The third level- punitive and coercive motivations: (This is where many of us often do our disciplining. We skip the second level or cannot figure it out).

Distracting- there are possible negative aspects to distracting as a method.

Motivation- positive and negative (keeping the motivation as relevant and logical to the situations as possible).

Positive- rewards and bribes.

Negative- scoldings and punishments (Timeout) & (Corporal Punishment).

****the second and third levels can be or are interrelated.**

The fourth level- Environmental or ecological approach to children.

(Or when nothing simple seems to be working.)

Consistency between all involved (between parents, between parents and other important adults including teachers) so as not to confuse them.

Information Exchange to clarify behavior and responses,
share expertise (parent to teacher & teacher to parent)

Insight Exchange to disclose and evaluate possible
underlying reasons for behavior.

Another level- Taking a hard look at the family.

Distinguishing Individual problems versus Family problems.

This is can be done within the family. Sometimes professional help makes sense.