

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

DISCIPLINING, NOT INTIMIDATING

If you're still struggling with your children's behaviour, you haven't tried RELATIONSHIP TECHNOLOGY using RESPECTFUL DISCIPLINE!

Setting limits with your children without losing it!

How many times have you got so worked up you regret what you said or did? Most parents would say that the child pushed them over the edge ... and to a degree they are accurate. However ... is it healthy for a child to have that much control over a parent's emotional state? I think not. So why does it end up this way?

Most of us were brought up in an era of parenting where limit setting and enforcing was done by variations of verbal and physical intimidation. "If you don't stop Mummy will get very angry!" (trading well being for compliance ... not a great deal!) or "Stop that or I'll smack you!" (training them to whack anyone whose behaviour they don't like ... not ideal!). The end result for most of us is that we don't have any effective models of how to set and enforce limits clearly and consistently without using insensitive methods (verbal or physical intimidation).

Fortunately, we are living in a more enlightened age where we actually now have better relational technology that enables us to get the job done as well as caring for the wellbeing needs of the child. In the old days it was TASK FIRST, FEELINGS SECOND, IF AT ALL! So most parents fall into two major categories, or a combination of the two. The intimidating parent who will use any level of insensitivity to gain compliance (and then often apologise or try to make up for it afterward) and the elastic parent who rarely enforces a limit (usually until it's too late and they revert to intimidating methods and/or end up burning out).

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

Relationship Technology using Respectful Discipline is a way of understanding relationships and acting upon them in a way that protects yourself, your children, teaching self-discipline to you both. It is likely to set you all on a path of self-discovery that will enable you to move into more choiceful ways of being in relationships of all forms. This is a very brief outline to give a broad brush-stroke, thus many details and explanations are not included here. It is important to understand how things got to be the way they are in order to understand your own habitual ineffectiveness however in this overview purely the behavioural will be included.

It is essential to realise that the whole purpose of this exercise is to **remain more loving more of the time**. Most parents lose hours, days and lifetimes of quality, enjoyable, loving time with their children because they are busy repetitively being ineffective in limit setting and enforcing. Dissociation is the major cause of repetitive ineffectiveness in relationship, however that is not the focus of this overview. Effectively managing the four basics is the beginning stage.

The four basics are **CLARITY, SETTING, ENFORCING & CONSISTENCY**.

Most parents use one or more, but rarely all four. All parents love their children ... it's their behaviours they have difficulty with. The child's job is find out how things work which means stretching things until they stop or break. The parent's job is to set and enforce the limit, clearly and consistently, in a way that doesn't hurt the child or the parent. Most parents SET, however not many do so using CLARITY, fewer ENFORCE and of the ones who do, most enforce using insensitive methods (verbal and/or physical intimidation). Parents tend to do CONSISTENCY the least ... the very thing we are expecting of the child!

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

CLARITY A major factor in why parents don't get effective results from their limit setting and enforcing is because it hasn't been made unmistakably CLEAR what the limit is. For example telling a child not to be disrespectful doesn't take into account their perception of what the word disrespectful means. Getting clear that in this case, not being disrespectful means 'no name-calling', or more specifically 'no calling someone an idiot' is CLEAR! Each behaviour must be gone through thoroughly with the child until they feed back to you that they are clear and understand exactly what you mean. Understanding the developmental stages of children is essential before beginning to get clear on what behaviours to work on, as many parents are not aware of what can be reasonably expected from the various age groups leading to disastrous results.

SETTING Most parents set limits ... in fact, almost endlessly. For example "I've told you a thousand times not to play with that glass vase!" or "I won't tell you again" which invariably means you will! SETTING can be a simple, neutrally toned reminder of what the clarity is in regards to this particular behaviour and what will happen if things continue. This allows the child to begin the process of self-reflection and ultimately self-discipline. "Do I want to continue or do I want the consequence?" It is essential that SETTING is not tonally manipulative or intimidating. The amount of reminders will vary from child to child and situation to situation, however the number of reminders ideally remains consistent.

ENFORCING Ideally, this is done in a way that does not intimidate, using 3rd party consequences. In fact, if a parent is using intimidation (insensitive methods) it is because their consequences (sensitive methods) aren't effective and therefore need refining. Third party consequences are the opposite of "If you don't stop Daddy will get very angry!" (sounds like a fun experiment, if you're a child and you haven't been

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

beaten up verbally or physically yet!). Third Party consequences are things like being sent to your room, having privileges taken away etc., in fact anything that doesn't involve the parent. The key to ENFORCING sensitively is having enough back-up consequences so that the child knows ahead of time that they are only digging a bigger hole for themselves and it isn't going to affect you, it is going to affect them! For example, swearing might have one reminder and be dealt with by a period of time out. If the child won't take the time out then they might lose a privilege, if they still won't go, then a variety of incremental consequences leading to not being able to be involved in the household for a period of time. This is where most parents fall down either because they are unwilling or unable to ENFORCE. Hence the saying 'it takes a whole village to bring up a child.' Parents may have to look beyond the family unit in order to develop effective back-up. However once the child realises that the back-up consequences DO happen they start complying with the earlier reminders and consequences.

CONSISTENCY This seems to be much harder for the parent than for the child. Most of our parents made things up on the spur of the moment, 'Breakdown Maintenance!' Consistency is a child's sense of security, where things begin and end. So, knowing exactly what is expected, exactly how many reminders they will get and that enforcement will happen CONSISTENTLY ie, every time and always in the same way. That way the child can rest in it, having tested it out regularly enough to take it as a given. The parent becomes reliable in the limit setting arena, which helps the child become reliable in the behavioural arena. My daughter delights in waiting till I count to two (before three) which she sees as being clever, and I see as an excellent display of self-discipline. She's thinking very cleverly about what she's doing and what she wants as an outcome.

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

Incentives are also an essential ingredient to encouraging compliant behaviour. Ideally, the parent would work out how often a behaviour is occurring and therefore what period of time it would be unusual for a behaviour not to occur and then ask themselves “What would it be worth to me if this improved to this degree and find something that the child would want and the that parent could offer CONSISTENTLY. We have a habit of waiting until the wheels fall off, trying to catch others out when they’re getting it wrong. The aim here is to catch children out when they’re getting it right and reward them so that they begin to self-discipline in a positive way ie. “ If I do this improvement for long enough I’ll get some goodies.” In the long run incentives work the best, however, they don’t work at all if not balanced with clear and consistent, setting and enforcing.

Childrearing is very complex and this is one aspect only and extremely simplified at that. However, these basics should give you an idea of what is likely to be going wrong if you or your child are ending up getting hurt or hassled. These methods do not lead to perfection, they simply deal with many of the major challenges that will leave you with more time and space to devote to meaningful, loving connection with your kids as well as the REALLY tricky stuff!

Most parents lose it because they set their limit ‘fence’ right at their nose, the child inevitably pushes the fence (as they’re meant to) and the parent reacts back in anger because they got hurt by the fence pushing their nose. That is not the child’s responsibility. That’s the parent’s responsibility to put the fence far enough away from their nose so that the child can push it and the parent will not get hurt. The parents role of enforcing the limit with a consequence is able to be done like a neutral referee telling player 15 they have a yellow card, or they’re sent off for a

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy

M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

certain amount of time. This way the parent is able to be an ally as well as a referee, instead of the monster from hell!

Before you start using this method make sure of two things. That you have gone through this with another adult (feel free to call me if you don't have another adult available) to make sure that what you are listing behaviourally and consequentially is absolutely CLEAR. And that you are 100% committed to all aspects of this method for a period of 8 weeks. After 8 weeks you may decide to renegotiate.

As someone who used to terrify my kids with loud tantrum-like screaming (and I'm still not perfect yet) I knew I was improving when I was the one setting a limit for my 5 year old, but I was able to do it in such a neutral way that he knew I still cared about his feelings and loved him all the same. He came to me to cry on my shoulder at the loss of his privilege. Not only that but because I wasn't angry or resentful, I was able to sincerely understand his sadness at the loss of his privilege. This is the ultimate test of separating out the person from the behaviour. My experience is that we can only do this if we are able to set and enforce enough limits around ourselves in order not to be getting hurt, in order not to be so jangled by our feelings that we can't think straight or act sensitively.

When you notice in retrospect that you've just acted in a way that you yourself would not call ideal, you can bet your bottom dollar that whatever it is that the child or person did has triggered an early childhood experience in you that is unresolved. This is why after that moment we say things like "I lost control, I don't know what came over me or I wasn't myself, I'm not usually like that". This is part of the dissociation that I talked about previously however that's a whole different article.

DAVID GOTLIEB

Bhakti Das



Counselling & Therapy
M.App.Sci Crit Psych, GDSE CMACA

If you would like any further information, individual or family work feel free to contact David Gotlieb on 02 4862 1920 or by email dvdgotlieb@gmail.com