

Natural Consequences

Writes Matt Stocks:

My wife and I recently went through a Love and Logic course. It was interesting because it was presented through the filters of statisticians with a belief in social contract, etc. We took the parts we felt were simply dealing with addressing a child not following the NAP and how do we teach them to not aggress against others instead of teaching them social norms. The one piece that we took away from the whole experience that we felt was really useful was to be a mentor to the child instead of an authoritarian. Love and Logic (at least from the presenters of our course) teaches how to peacefully be the authority.

The part I really liked was to let the consequence be the bad guy. Love your child. "I'm sorry you have to deal with this consequence, I will still love you while you deal with the consequence you brought about." The part I didn't like is the consequence was typically akin to caging the child in their room. Preparing them to accept that a cage is a normal and acceptable consequence for their actions.

When you take sending the child to their room (caging them) as a consequence out of the equation, you really have to rethink what is really a bad behavior. I used to get really frustrated with my boys because they are always breaking things. There is never a "good" reason. I decided their happiness is more important to me than the towel rod they just ripped out of the wall. I allow them to rip towel rods out of the wall now. The difference is that they now receive Home Depot receipts from me in exchange for the broken towel rods. They have learned it is no fun to tell Grandma that they bought a towel rod with their birthday money. We haven't had a broken towel rod for quite awhile now. I don't have to deal with anger toward my children, and they know, first hand, how much it costs to repair

drywall and paint it and replace a towel rack. Good lesson for them, less stress for me. Win, win.

We try to look at the degree of the consequence more realistically. Why do we not like a particular behavior? Does it cause inconvenience for us (cleaning spaghetti off the ceiling)? Or is their monetary pain for us? Is it just a personal pet peeve? Does it cause disruption to others? If we are frustrated because it creates a lot of work for us, or cost for us, we just let them own the consequence and love them through it.

The most important thing is that we try to find the real world, natural consequence of their actions and let them face them and learn from them. We now spend our time teaching them how to manage natural consequences instead of conditioning them to submit the will of "authority."

Other natural, interpersonal consequences include hurt feelings, resentment, alienation. The kinds of natural consequences that would result from a parent punishing his child, in other words.

Skyler.