

Discipline: Teaching Through Love Instead of Fear

Editor's Pick. Written by Pam Leo.

Can you imagine threatening your partner or good friend by counting “One... two... three...” if he or she did not do what you wanted?

One of the big issues in schools today is “bullying.” Parents and teachers struggle daily with how to stop this behavior. Without realizing it, adults teach bullying behavior to children by modeling it when they use the threat of their physical size or power to make children do things. When I hear a parent counting “One... two” at a young child, I always wonder what the child has been told will happen if the parent gets to three. Is it the threat of a spanking, being yelled at, time out, abandonment (I’m going without you) or the withdrawal of love and approval? Whatever the threat may be, I rarely hear “three.” As intended, the threat of what will happen if the parent gets to three usually compels the child to do whatever it is the parent is telling the child to do. Parents use threats to get children to cooperate because that was what adults so often modeled when we were growing up. Most of us are familiar with the phrase “or else.” We did what we were told out of fear even if we didn’t know what the “or else” would be.

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