



## "I was a Better Parent Before I had Kids!"

An Interactive 6-session Parenting Series exclusively for parents of our preschool with School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski.



## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

This discussion was led by School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The discussion notes below were written by Dr. Dobkowski.

### Introduction

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When you become a parent, you join the ranks of an absolutely unique 24 hour a-day profession. The raising of a child is a complex and difficult proposition. But it is one of the most fulfilling tasks in the world.

1. Contemporary society gives practically no training in how to parent.
  2. Each parent in this room is a child psychologist because you need to understand the behaviors and emotions of your own children.
  3. Parenting is a learning process. When we learn a new skill we learn by making mistakes.
  4. There is a widespread notion that the 'good' parent is the parent who never gets upset or ruffled. I have never met such a parent. It is essential for parents to give honest expression to their feelings and emotions.
- Child discipline is a widely discussed topic. Typically, books on discipline are built around a single system, such as 'active listening,' or 'behavior modification. The common thread behind all of these theories is that they generally conclude, "This is the way to discipline your child."
  - A single system is completely inadequate. The true nature of discipline is *teaching* (the Hebrew word for parents-*horim* comes from the same root as *morah*-teacher). When we discipline children we are teaching them two things: to use desirable behavior and to eliminate or avoid undesirable behavior.
  - Parents mistakenly think of discipline as something negative that parents do to make their children behave. Discipline is a process of teaching that goes on all the time.
  - If discipline is teaching, then there cannot be only one approach to the subject (ex: teaching a class of different level students)
  - The art of raising children is having the wisdom to know which situations call for firm limit-setting without lengthy negotiations, which call for active discussion and negotiation, and which call for ignoring.

### Setting Limits

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
- A national survey (July 2001) found that two-thirds of parents in the United States believe that they spoil their children. The survey reported that 80% of the adults interviewed believed that children today are more spoiled than children 10 or 15 years ago.

- Numerous books and magazine articles lament the decline of firm parental discipline and the rise of permissiveness. Permissiveness is blamed for the rising drug abuse, immorality, rebellious behavior, etc.
- One of the greatest challenges of parenting in today's world is the reluctance on the part of the parents to place limits on their children. There seems to be an ingrained belief, perhaps due to the emphasis on validating and supporting children's emotions at all costs, that if a child is upset by a restriction, the parent should reconsider his/her position. What contributes to the parents' reluctance? What are the major causes of parental permissiveness?
  - a. Parents feel quite uncertain and apprehensive about how to bring up children. We now know that the way we raise our children actually can determine how they turn out. Parents are now terribly afraid of making mistakes in raising their children.
  - b. Deep down the parent is operating with the subconscious motto: *If I don't do what my child wants, he will not love me.* Many parents are afraid that if they are firm, decisive, and if they say 'no' and are mean (i.e., they use their parental authority) that they will lose the love of their child.
- Diana Baumrind's four patterns of parenting styles based upon two aspects of parenting behavior-control and warmth:
  1. **Authoritative**-Parents are warm and firm. They encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions.
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  3. **Permissive**-Parents are very warm but undemanding. They are indulgent and passive in their parenting.
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- Children thrive in a family atmosphere that is authoritative, with parents who provide clear and firm direction in a context of warmth and open communication. Children actually welcome the structure and limits.

### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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- To teach a child, you first need to establish good rapport.
- Some parents often issue commands or make requests without ever establishing rapport. Many parents believe their children should obey requests and commands simply because they feel that children should obey parents.
- Rules without relationships often results in rebellion.
- From toddlerhood and on, many parents make the critical error of neglecting the task of continuing to build rapport with their children.
- Every hug or kiss, every warm word, does important work in helping to build a child's confidence, sense of security, and self-esteem. Parental affection strengthens the child-parent bond and the child's ability to bond with others.
- Often we turn instinctively to punishment as option one for changing behavior. We concentrate so intensely on the behavior we want to eliminate and forget to praise and reinforce the behavior we do want.

## **Jewish Perspective on Setting Limits**

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- The Talmud teaches that the key to raising successful children is to find the balance between the *left hand that pushes away, and the right hand that draws closer*. This refers to the balance between limit-setting and emotional connection.
- When children know that their parents' limit-setting takes place in the context of love and caring, they are far less likely to challenge parental rules.
- Torah Examples:
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## **Recommendations**

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- Choosing which limits to place on children is a constantly evolving process informed by each child's age and temperament.
- Consistency in enforcing limits is crucial. Therefore parents should carefully choose which rules are worthy battlegrounds. Furthermore, parents need to find the 'teaching' methods that suit them and that they are most comfortable with.
- Periodic calm conversations with your children regarding the rules of the home can be extremely helpful. Children are far more likely to comply when they understand the reasoning behind the rules.
- Children do NOT have to like the limits being set.
- Myths of Effective Parenting:
  1. *Punishment will change bad behavior*—Parents typically assume that punishing a child will teach a lesson by 'sending a message'. Regardless of how it is being done (mildly or severely, calmly or angrily, systematically or randomly), parents often find themselves punishing a great deal or threatening to punish.
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- c. Punishing a child can dramatically change the behavior of parents
2. *A lot of praise spoils the child*- Praise is one of the strongest ways to influence your child's actions. It can be the essential ingredient in improving behavior, or it can make behavior worse. The result depends on the quality of the praise and upon how and when it is delivered.
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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

This discussion was led by School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The discussion notes below were written by Dr. Dobkowski.

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### Setting Limits

- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
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### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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An Interactive 6-session Parenting Series exclusively for parents of our preschool with School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski.



## Parent Enrichment Program Session 1 Discussion Notes Topic: "Love + Discipline = Possible?"

This discussion was led by School Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Dobkowski on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The discussion notes below were written by Dr. Dobkowski.

### Introduction

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When you become a parent, you join the ranks of an absolutely unique 24 hour a-day profession. The raising of a child is a complex and difficult proposition. But it is one of the most fulfilling tasks in the world.

1. Contemporary society gives practically no training in how to parent.
  2. Each parent in this room is a child psychologist because you need to understand the behaviors and emotions of your own children.
  3. Parenting is a learning process. When we learn a new skill we learn by making mistakes.
  4. There is a widespread notion that the 'good' parent is the parent who never gets upset or ruffled. I have never met such a parent. It is essential for parents to give honest expression to their feelings and emotions.
- Child discipline is a widely discussed topic. Typically, books on discipline are built around a single system, such as 'active listening,' or 'behavior modification. The common thread behind all of these theories is that they generally conclude, "This is the way to discipline your child."
  - A single system is completely inadequate. The true nature of discipline is *teaching* (the Hebrew word for parents-*horim* comes from the same root as *morah*-teacher). When we discipline children we are teaching them two things: to use desirable behavior and to eliminate or avoid undesirable behavior.
  - Parents mistakenly think of discipline as something negative that parents do to make their children behave. Discipline is a process of teaching that goes on all the time.
  - If discipline is teaching, then there cannot be only one approach to the subject (ex: teaching a class of different level students)
  - The art of raising children is having the wisdom to know which situations call for firm limit-setting without lengthy negotiations, which call for active discussion and negotiation, and which call for ignoring.

### Setting Limits

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- One of the mechanisms which children and adolescents use to create their sense of identity and independence is the 'testing of limits.' Parents are often uncomfortable dealing with the anger and disappointment that they may engender when they say 'no.'
- A national survey (July 2001) found that two-thirds of parents in the United States believe that they spoil their children. The survey reported that 80% of the adults interviewed believed that children today are more spoiled than children 10 or 15 years ago.

- Numerous books and magazine articles lament the decline of firm parental discipline and the rise of permissiveness. Permissiveness is blamed for the rising drug abuse, immorality, rebellious behavior, etc.
- One of the greatest challenges of parenting in today's world is the reluctance on the part of the parents to place limits on their children. There seems to be an ingrained belief, perhaps due to the emphasis on validating and supporting children's emotions at all costs, that if a child is upset by a restriction, the parent should reconsider his/her position. What contributes to the parents' reluctance? What are the major causes of parental permissiveness?
  - a. Parents feel quite uncertain and apprehensive about how to bring up children. We now know that the way we raise our children actually can determine how they turn out. Parents are now terribly afraid of making mistakes in raising their children.
  - b. Deep down the parent is operating with the subconscious motto: *If I don't do what my child wants, he will not love me.* Many parents are afraid that if they are firm, decisive, and if they say 'no' and are mean (i.e., they use their parental authority) that they will lose the love of their child.
- Diana Baumrind's four patterns of parenting styles based upon two aspects of parenting behavior-control and warmth:
  1. **Authoritative**-Parents are warm and firm. They encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions.
  2. **Authoritarian**-Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling.
  3. **Permissive**-Parents are very warm but undemanding. They are indulgent and passive in their parenting.
  4. **Uninvolved**-Parents are not warm and do not place any demands on their children.
- Children thrive in a family atmosphere that is authoritative, with parents who provide clear and firm direction in a context of warmth and open communication. Children actually welcome the structure and limits.

### **Rapport: The Foundation of All Discipline**

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- To teach a child, you first need to establish good rapport.
- Some parents often issue commands or make requests without ever establishing rapport. Many parents believe their children should obey requests and commands simply because they feel that children should obey parents.
- Rules without relationships often results in rebellion.
- From toddlerhood and on, many parents make the critical error of neglecting the task of continuing to build rapport with their children.
- Every hug or kiss, every warm word, does important work in helping to build a child's confidence, sense of security, and self-esteem. Parental affection strengthens the child-parent bond and the child's ability to bond with others.
- Often we turn instinctively to punishment as option one for changing behavior. We concentrate so intensely on the behavior we want to eliminate and forget to praise and reinforce the behavior we do want.

## **Jewish Perspective on Setting Limits**

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- The Talmud teaches that the key to raising successful children is to find the balance between the *left hand that pushes away, and the right hand that draws closer*. This refers to the balance between limit-setting and emotional connection.
- When children know that their parents' limit-setting takes place in the context of love and caring, they are far less likely to challenge parental rules.
- Torah Examples:
  - a. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah) teaches that Pinchas and Elijah were the same person. There is an interesting duality in the Torah's description of Pinchas and Elijah. Pinchas initially gained prominence as a zealot who defended Hashem's honor. He knew when a situation called for a high level of firmness and passion. He was also known for his ability to bring peace (when there was concern that the tribes of Reuven and Gad were separating themselves from the mainstream of Jewish life, Pinchas was chosen to be the messenger to make peace). Pinchas embraced the task of integrating the two necessary components for effective leadership—love and limit.
  - b. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah) involving Yaakov's burial. As a deaf man, Chushim was not drawn into Esav's irrelevant arguments. Certain situations call for action rather than negotiation.
- There are times in parenting that call for a calm and reasoned explanation for refusing to grant a child's request but there are also times when the appropriate answer is 'no'—without an explanation.

## **Recommendations**

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- Choosing which limits to place on children is a constantly evolving process informed by each child's age and temperament.
- Consistency in enforcing limits is crucial. Therefore parents should carefully choose which rules are worthy battlegrounds. Furthermore, parents need to find the 'teaching' methods that suit them and that they are most comfortable with.
- Periodic calm conversations with your children regarding the rules of the home can be extremely helpful. Children are far more likely to comply when they understand the reasoning behind the rules.
- Children do NOT have to like the limits being set.
- Myths of Effective Parenting:
  1. *Punishment will change bad behavior*—Parents typically assume that punishing a child will teach a lesson by 'sending a message'. Regardless of how it is being done (mildly or severely, calmly or angrily, systematically or randomly), parents often find themselves punishing a great deal or threatening to punish.
    - a. Punishment all by itself is relatively ineffective in changing behavior. Why? Because it does not teach a child what to do and it does not reward the desired behavior.
    - b. The 'punishment trap'—The child does something genuinely bad—immediate punishment leads to the behavior stopping instantly—child adapts to punishment and the unwanted behavior returns in more frequency—scale of punishment increases (i.e., longer time-outs, privileges removed for longer times, shouting and anger escalates).

- c. Punishing a child can dramatically change the behavior of parents
2. *A lot of praise spoils the child*- Praise is one of the strongest ways to influence your child's actions. It can be the essential ingredient in improving behavior, or it can make behavior worse. The result depends on the quality of the praise and upon how and when it is delivered.
- a. *Caboosing*- The parent adds a negative comment to positive praise, thereby diluting its useful effect



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