

Appropriate Discipline Behavior for the Elementary Age

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My most memorable years of school were the elementary years. Those years are filled with remembrance of playground activities and classes based on early learning methods for children that relied on color, sound, and turning simple lessons into games. Those years also bring back memories of some of my favorite teachers, and some of my not-so-favorite teachers. The fine line between a favorite teacher and one of my disliked teachers seem to have been written based on that teachers disciplinary actions when I, or another student “misbehaved”. Up until today, I had feared the word *discipline*. Not because I had been a troubled kid, but because I often referred to being *disciplined* as *to get punished for a mistake*. What took me twenty-three years to learn, is that the word discipline *actually* comes from the word *disciplinare*, which is only the Latin word for *to teach* (Byrne-Biancardi, 2015, <http://lifehacker.com>). *To teach* is a whole lot less intimidating than *to punish*.

A bunch of fellow twenty-something year olds chimed in on a post I published on Facebook today, which asked my friends, family, and acquaintances if they have ever been inappropriately disciplined throughout elementary school. I also asked them to give me some examples and tell me how this affected their childhood. I was over-whelmed with responses and private messages, leaving me with almost 100 prime examples of purely inappropriate teacher behavior.

So what went wrong? Why did so many students from my generation fear discipline when its only meaning was *to teach* or guide a child’s behavior? Many of the examples given by my responders are scenarios where the student was left feeling embarrassed in front of the class. In fact, the definition of *Embarrass* is “to throw into a state of self-conscious distress” and the definition of *to bully* is “to inflict physical or emotional harm upon (Merriam-Webster, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>).” It’s quite possible that some of these teachers have been feeding into today’s bullying epidemic all along. A girl named Danielle recalled a time where

she was embarrassed by a teacher she once looked up to. Danielle publicly shared about when she first started getting acne in the third grade. She remembered the day very clearly – her teacher had called her the *Zit Queen* in front of the class – leaving Danielle extremely embarrassed. I couldn't even imagine what Danielle had gone through after the experience, especially since I (and most other third-graders) had always been a self-conscious child.

There are a few characteristics that some of my better, most inspiring teachers shared – tolerant, creative, and supportive. These teachers relied strictly on positive reinforcement and customized lessons for the students, alike myself, who struggled learning through a simple textbook lesson. Since I entered the public school system, I had always struggled – it was the teachers with patience, support, and spunk that got me all the way through my high school graduation.

The most constructive discipline seemed to have been positive reinforcement, rather than punishment. Positive reinforcement is what brought me out of my shell as a student. It taught me that it is not embarrassing to raise your hand in class, that it's okay to ask for help when you are falling behind, and that good behavior leads to more rewards as both an individual and a class as a whole. Many teachers will use a prop such as play money, candy, or gold stars to reward good behavior in children. I've seen first-hand how rewards like this make a positive impact in a young students learning in a lesson or in his/her behavior. It gives the student something to be proud about and something they can share with their parents, classmates, and themselves. Positive reinforce gets children in the habit of making good decisions and rewards respectable behavior – a lesson they will use for a lifetime.

References

- Byrne-Biancardi, S. (2015, January 12). Six Tips on Disciplining Children from an Experienced Teacher. Retrieved from <http://lifelife.com/six-tips-on-disciplining-children-from-an-experienced-t-1679048782>
- Merriam-Webster, Inc. (2017). *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://merriam-webster.com>

Rationale Statement**Date of Completion:** September 2017**Date of Submission:** September 2017**Title of Artifact:** Appropriate Discipline Behavior for the Elementary Age**Standard:** Standard Eight: Instructional Strategies – The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

I am placing this artifact under Standard Eight because it displays how a teacher should *not* act. Appropriate teacher behavior is very important for students not only of elementary age, but also of all ages.