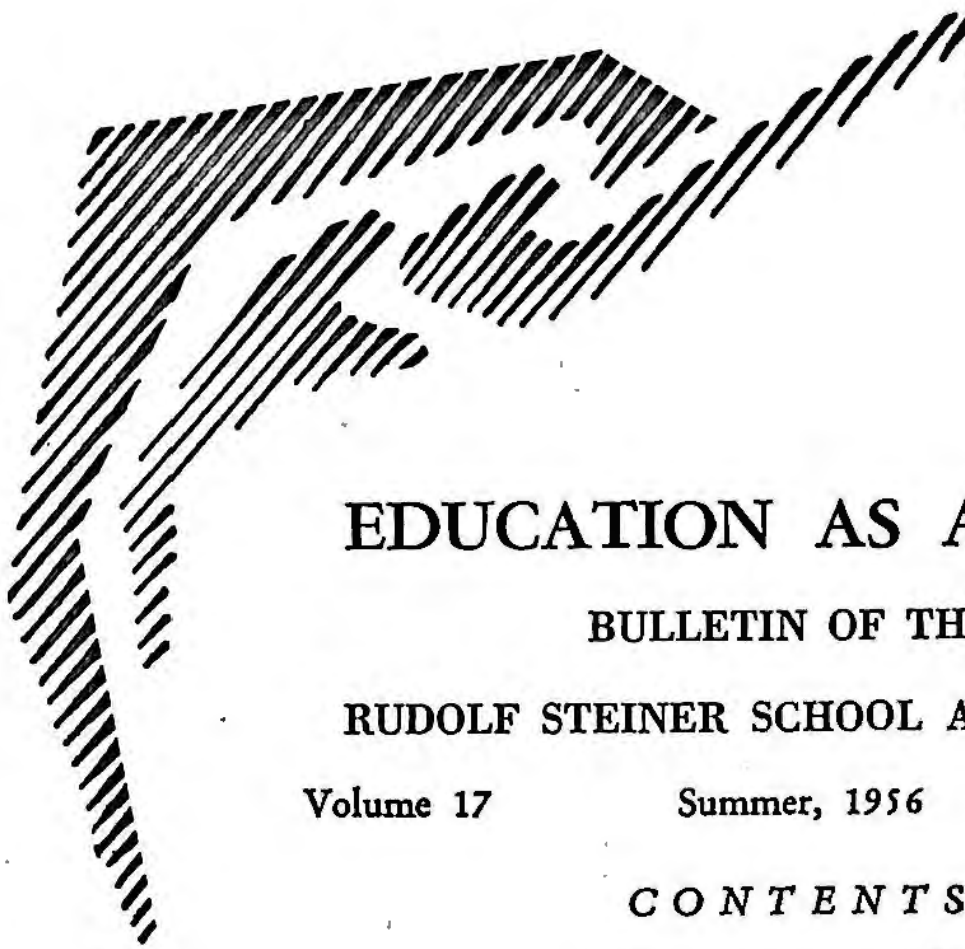




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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Let children learn by heart, while minds are young,
The songs great thinkers in their youth have sung
And in their age the maxims they have wrought
Out of their own experience and thought;
For songs of thinkers and brave dreams of singers
Are lasting watchwords, living wisdom-bringers.

Percy MacKaye

DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

Fellow Authorities on Discipline: In our own homes, as parents, each of us is confronted daily with the many challenges and rewards of living with children. Discipline in the home is of necessity more relaxed than discipline in the school yet our standards are, or should be, just as high.

When I asked my ten-year-old what he thought about home discipline, he said, "Well, I think parents don't get anywhere if they're too strict. . . . And if they're too kind, they don't get anywhere either." "What do you mean?" "Well," he said "when parents are too kind, the kids know that they can get away with anything. And if they're too strict, the child will be ruled by fear (those were his words) and do bad things in secret."

I think most of us come to the same general conclusion—that the answer lies in moderation. I think most of us also come to other general conclusions concerning discipline, such as that the essence of discipline is self-control, implying in a way the overcoming of inner resistance; that self-respect and respect for others demands a fair set of house rules; that it is up to us parents to enforce these rules, knowing in advance that we will have to allow for frequent exceptions; and that the aim of outer discipline is to create inner discipline.

As a parent I have been thinking about the subject of discipline for the past several years. For the past several days I have been trying to organize some of these thoughts. Tonight I would like to share with you what I consider the three most important aspects of discipline in the home.

One: I believe that in order to use discipline wisely that parents should understand the over-all patterns of child development, plus of course, the unique patterns of their own unique children. Two: Parents should keep in mind their long-range goals for their children and not give in to the temptation to buy peace at any price. Three: I'm sure we all agree that in the final analysis, children learn not from what we say, but from what we are, and that we, as parents, must *be* the kind of people that we want our children to become.

My first point then was that parents should know what to expect from their children. In the long process of civilizing them, the first disciplines are in the routines—eating, sleeping, dressing. And for a small child these routines, when mastered, can be considered major accomplishments. As our children grow, our demands on them should grow in proportion. Judy, who is six, still has to be reminded to hang up her coat when she comes into the house, but I do expect Debby and David, who are eight and ten, to hang up their coats automatically. I expect my two older children to have a pretty accurate sense of time—to get to school on time, to get to their outside lessons on time, and to be reasonably prompt when it is time to come home. For Judy, who is still never absolutely sure what day it is, time is a discipline yet to be learned.

I have found that many of the routine disciplines can be reduced to problems of management. It is easier to keep one's room neat, for instance, when there are special places for everything to go. Good table manners ensue more readily when the table is prepared with care.

Parents who are aware of the different stages of development of a child will be able to differentiate between periods of inner crisis and periods of relative calm. The odd behavior of adolescents can be exasperating in the extreme, but parents with understanding can appreciate the deep inner turmoil that lies behind it and can respond accordingly. There is also the need to recognize the temperament of one's own particular child. It would be a great mistake to try to handle an unusually sensitive child in the same way that one might deal with a child of a tougher nature.

Most children are good most of the time. In most families when there is a warm loving relationship between the parents and children, discipline rarely becomes a problem. When a child habitually misbehaves, however, such as in lying or stealing, parents must not only mete out discipline but ask

themselves why. Why does my child feel the need to rebel in this way? Oftentimes the naughtier the child the greater the need for sympathetic treatment and largeness of heart on the part of the parents.

My second point concerns long-term and short-term goals. This principle in economics, namely, that one must be able to postpone present pleasures in order to work more effectively toward the achievement of major objectives, holds equally true in the realm of child-rearing. Children rely to a large measure on their senses. They have an uncanny instinct for ferreting out the weaknesses of the adults around them. They sense just how far they can push us before we throw up our hands in despair and say, "All right, all right. Anything for a little peace and quiet." Children will resort to tears or tantrums to get their own way, especially when we are tired or when there are guests present. It is a temptation for us to take the easy way out, to give in to the child temporarily, but we all know how the short-term gratification weakens the long-range goal. Often children dream up fancy excuses to get out of doing their chores, whether it be washing the dishes or practicing the piano. They beg and beg to be allowed to stay up late, to have a television set or any of a number of things of which we disapprove. On these occasions it is helpful if we can be true to our long-term goals.

My third point was that whether we like it or not, we parents are and must be examples for our children. This realization makes us want to tidy up the gaps in our own lives. It forces us to become responsible human beings worthy of emulation. Sometimes we have to face up to uncomfortable questions. Just how disciplined am I, I ask myself. How well do I control my temper? Do I get my work done on time? Am I able to perform unpleasant tasks with reasonable good grace? How able am I to make a wise choice in a difficult situation? When I ask myself these and other questions, of course I find that I fall far short of my ideals. We all do. But I believe that by earnestly trying to liberate our higher selves, though we may fail, we let our children know that here is a struggle which is worthwhile.

Fortunately we parents can continue to grow along with our children on the many levels of discipline as well as in the making of difficult decisions.

Betty Lippman



CLASS DISCIPLINE

When we speak of a class we are, in my opinion, necessarily speaking of discipline; for in its simplest form, a class is a group of children who, in our case, come together to learn. Of course, learning may take place in many situations, but it is the specific purpose of a class. It is in "learning" that what I believe to be the true meaning of discipline lies. With the class and for the class, the teacher strives to create as ideal a learning situation as he can, out of his knowledge of and his relationship to the children.

With the very young children who live in the world of imitation, the teacher creates a fairy-tale atmosphere and lives in it with her children. She works with them and plays with them, for through her attitude in all she says and does, the children learn. When she wishes them to do some modelling work, she puts out the clay and boards around the table and she herself sits down and takes a piece of clay and begins to fashion a rabbit or turtle or whatever, and very soon the children flock around her, eagerly wanting to use the clay too. When it is time to go upstairs to rest period, the children must go quietly, they must be relaxed. If in her attitude, the teacher says something like, "Now children, you will walk upstairs without a word and lie down on your beds quietly," they will probably do just that, but where is the relaxation? How can they really rest under this tension? If, however, on the other hand, she says, "We are all little mice who creep upstairs and into our beds so that no one in the house hears us," (it matters not so much what she says as how she says it), if she is quiet and walks on tiptoe, all the little mice will follow along, and will love it and will want to do it every time; it will be "the" way to go upstairs and they will be prepared to rest. The teacher, appealing to the children out of their particular stage of development, acting within the realm of her relationship to them, has created the mood. So the learning takes place, the discipline is right, and what we may call discipline problems are reduced to a minimum—they are individual.

As the children grow older, as they increase in ability and independence, as they gradually advance to a new stage of development, their way of learning gradually changes and a different approach and a new kind of relationship between class and teacher is required. How shall the best mood for learning now be created? If instruction or direction is given, if a question is asked or an answer is given, the class must be able to listen — to listen with complete attention, not playing with something in the desk or poking at a neighbor, but in a fully concentrated way. Aside from removing as many external distractions as possible, including the playthings in the desk or even the bothersome neighbor (which is really a protection for the child), the teacher must herself be fully concentrated. All her efforts must go in the direction of her class. Real concentration is refreshing; it does not tire as half-hearted efforts do, and so the teacher strives to call forth the wholehearted enthusiasm of the children, to capture and hold their attention by appealing through the lively, living realm of the imagination. The imaginative approach is what the children are longing for at this age, and whatever is presented in such a way is satisfying to them, they respond to it with enthusiasm, they say "YES" to it, and learning is joy!

It must be remembered, however, that the children's span of concentration in any one kind of activity is limited. If a class is kept at mental arithmetic for too long a period, no matter how interested or attentive they have been, they will grow restless and inattentive and begin to squirm or chatter or play with their fingers or their ears; Johnny will ask permission to get a drink, followed by half a dozen others, or Betty will ask, "Will you please tell us a story?" They need a change! To continue with this activity is not only fruitless, it can be damaging. The children will not learn for the mood originally created no longer exists, and a persistent "to the bitter end" attitude of the teacher either irritates the children further or

sends them into a dull stupor; as the teacher pushes harder, the children become tense; there is no learning, the discipline is wrong, and out of such situations discipline problems which would not ordinarily exist, arise.

So the plan, the structure, the form of the day is a most important factor in learning, in discipline. The children need a balance of activity. A change renews them after concentrated effort and they are eager to go on to the next phase of the work. There must be a sort of breathing, a flow from one kind of activity to another; the thinking and the doing, the quiet and the lively. As I overheard one of my children telling another, "There is a time to be noisy and a time to be quiet," and so there is! Children need "breaks" even as, or more so, than grown-ups. You know how many coffee breaks adults take in the course of a day, and we call it "catching a breath."

Even the best approach and the most carefully arranged form of the day's activities will be effective only if there exists the proper relationship between the children and the teacher. Her mistakes and failings (and after all, fortunately, teachers are human and do make mistakes) are forgiven and taken in good spirit if her basic connection to the children is right. This relationship, I think, depends fundamentally upon a genuine love and respect for the child as well as a strong guidance; the firm but loving hand, the loving but firm hand, both qualities are essential. Without the firmness, the children do not receive the control they need when they are incapable of self-control. They need boundaries set for them by someone whom they feel has a deep concern for them. Within these boundaries they find protection and security; they can relax and give themselves over freely to the adventures of learning. They want to know what they may or may not do, whether in class work, lining up or playing in the park. They want to test their limits and they respect and appreciate someone who consistently but lovingly holds them to these limits. Without the love, the firmness can become a pressure, a bearing down upon the children. They become tense and cross, unable therefore to concentrate, so while they may "behave," they do not learn and grow to their full abilities. The teacher who holds a class in this fashion becomes a rather ridiculous figure to the children and while they may appear to be listening with placid expressions, they are probably planning some gruesome prank to play upon her.

Perhaps the most valuable asset in dealing with children is a sense of humor!

Now I haven't at all mentioned correction or punishment which are, after all, a part of learning, of discipline. Children have strengths and weaknesses and the teacher deals with the weaknesses as well as the strengths. But I think correction is primarily an individual matter which is worked out through the understanding of the child and his particular problems, and the situation at hand. In speaking of what would be called a normal, healthy class with a reasonably normal, healthy teacher, where there is knowledge and understanding of children and their development out of which emerges the proper approach and the right form of the class activities, where there is the right relationship between children and teacher, there the most favorable mood for learning is created, there the discipline is right.

Nanette Grimm

SOME NOTES ON DISCIPLINE

The following notes were contributed and assembled some years ago by teachers of the Rudolf Steiner School. The first paragraphs are from notes taken while Dr. Steiner was speaking to teachers at the Waldorf School in Stuttgart.



DISCIPLINE

Lying

Dr. Steiner: "Think out a case in which an untruthful child, through his very lying, is led into a situation which he cannot help seeing is absurd. If you tell a tale of this kind, and then another, and then yet another of the same kind, you will, as a rule, cure him of his lying propensities."

"It is practical to wait for some things to pall, so the children stop of themselves."

"One must distinguish between naughtiness and high spirits."

"Humor is also a good remedy."

"If anything has been injured, the children themselves must make it good, but through their own work, not by paying for it."

"It is extraordinarily good for moral education to treat a thing homeopathically. It is also a good method simply to turn the attention of the children to something else."

As children begin to leave their early period of fairy-tale phantasy, a tendency to tell small fibs sometimes arises. At this time the adult must be especially careful not to apply adult standards to this fibbing, which is often a very innocent carrying-over of the fairy-tale world into dull, everyday life to make it happier. But sometimes it happens that the wrong discipline has caused a fear of punishment and a child fibs to evade consequences, or to possess something desired. When this happens, the most delicate treatment is called for, as mistakes in handling may do permanent harms. Dr. Steiner has suggested humor as a very good way for treating some discipline problems and the following treatment produced good results:

A small six-year-old girl showed an increasing tendency to make untruthful statements to get out of punishment or uncomfortable situations and often to make herself appear important. The cause of this attitude lay outside of school life and had to be especially carefully dealt with in school. One day all the children were boasting together of what they had seen. One began, "I saw an enormous big black cat on the way to school." Another said, "That's nothing! I saw two yesterday!" Then the small girl piped up,

"Pooh! That's nothing! I saw six cats this morning!" Quickly teacher joined in. "Is *that* all you saw! On my way to school I saw five cats walking down one side of the street and five cats walking up the other side!" The little exaggerator looked at me with a twinkle in her eye and burst out laughing! After that she felt that we had an understanding and that she couldn't fool me.

Grimm's "Märiekind" is an ideal story to tell small children when there has been lying. Told carefully, without additions or comments, it works strongly on a child's inner being, as often revealed by their remarks and suspense during the telling.

Stealing

Like lying, stealing in children, should not really be called stealing, nor should it be judged as it must be in an adult. The tendency to take things often comes from a lack of realization of the fact that certain things definitely belong to someone else, and even, sometimes, from a mistaken sense of justice. In very small children there is no question of actual stealing for they act from limitation. If they see their mothers take money from a purse, they may take money from the same purse without any thought about its belonging to someone else. Of course, they will gradually be taught not to touch things not their own, but the full significance of the matter is not all clear until much later.

A case of stealing, of a child about nine years, was successfully treated by telling the child a story about the trust a master workman gave his apprentices and how one betrayed it and finally repented. The story worked strongly on the child, who returned the money stolen and explained why it had been taken. A story of this kind must be carefully chosen and told with great sincerity and inner feeling.

Quarreling

Two boys were sent from the dining-room for fighting over their trays. One was a big boy from the upper class and the other a small boy. The teacher to whom they were sent first listened to each child's complaints and talked it over with him. Finally the younger boy accepted his share of the blame and went away content, but the older one persisted in saying, "If he hits me, I'll hit him back!" The teacher pointed out that he would be acting no better than a little boy and that hitting a smaller child was only a cause for shame, but he still reiterated, "If he hits me, I'll hit him back!" Then the teacher followed Dr. Steiner's advice and gave a brief description of a parallel experience in a story—

"Supposing," said he, "a big strong wolfdog were going down the street and suddenly a little lap-dog ran out and began yapping and snapping at his heels. Would the wolfdog bite the little dog's head off?"

Suddenly the big boy saw himself in a new light and realized the foolishness of his violence over a small matter.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN AROUND THE NINTH YEAR AND OLDER

1. When an outburst of temper occurs, take it calmly and impersonally, saying very little, but the next morning, when the child is refreshed by sleep, have her recall the incident and endeavor to have her view her conduct objectively.

2. One teacher accomplished a great deal with a pupil by having him come after each school day and go over each thing done or undone and make a record of it. The child responded with interest and an eager desire to improve his own record.

3. A deep and lasting impression can be made by relating incidents in the lives of great men and women, bringing out outstanding traits. This can be done in connection with history. All young people have their heroes in whose paths they try to walk as they climb to the heights of Olympus. Much can be done for a child indirectly by pointing out some admirable characteristic of his or her hero.

The beginning of discipline is for adults. This leads to being respected.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." (If children understand clearly what is required of them and the adult is consistent, there is less apt to be need of a "cure," punishment). A few simple rules should be given to children and then followed through at whatever inconvenience.

Never nag! If an act is wrong, it should be dealt with, without discussion in the case of very little children, as little talk as possible in any case, and without anger or excitement.

Justice is always accepted by children as something strong to lean on.
Distinguish between naughtiness and ill-health.

Distinguish between impudence and real wit.

It is often best to use a child's difficulties of temperament, rather than repress them.

An adult needs much patience, as children can only be properly trained by repetition, until good behavior becomes a habit of consideration for others' social rights.

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