

Special Character-Wise Report

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Does Your Child Fear You?



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Executive Summary

Every parent agrees that *discipline* is a key focus when it comes to training the child to be a contributing (not consuming) adult. In this special *Character-Wise* report, I would like to propose a radical (and yet fundamental) perspective with regards to effective discipline:

There is no discipline without fear.

The word “discipline” roots itself in the concept of being a *disciple*. Now, how can you disciple (coach) someone who does not fear you? For this *Character-Wise* report, I am focusing on the positive aspect of fear that has the connotation of respect, humility and being *teachable*.

Beyond this article, the topic of exercising right leadership at home is covered extensively in a one-day workshop for parents with children 12 years old and below. Check it out at:

<http://www.goodmonday.com/parenting.html> .

So, let’s get to it – here are three ways your child will (rightfully and respectfully) fear you!

Fear #1: MY PARENT MEANS WHAT HE SAYS!

Discipline is more *communication* than consequences.

Discipline is about training the child *before* the misbehaviour. For this to be effective, there are two assumptions on the child:

1. The child *listens* attentively to instructions.
2. The child is motivated to *obey* the given instruction.

Let’s face it – we listen and obey someone whom we respect and fear. During the primary season of parenting (when the child is 12 years old and below), there is a greater demand on the parent to exercise loving authority because the child’s moral faculty is still developing. In other words, the voice of their conscience is not strong enough to overcome their selfish tendencies.

Delayed obedience is disobedience.

Is the following scene familiar? – “*Johnny, please put away your toys now....did you hear me (increasing volume)..I say, pick up your toys!...How many times (pitch getting feverish now) do I have to tell you to be neat and pick up after you!!Johnny, look at me when I am talking to you!*” Eventually, the toys are picked up but your blood pressure have also gone up accordingly!

Here’s the tip: Do not be ruffled when your child does not obey the first time. Resist the temptation to nag. Do not even say anything immediately. Take a deep breath. Later, when you have a moment of uninterrupted conversation with the child, recount the infraction and impose a memorable consequence – say it calmly and authoritatively. Hold your ground (be ready for 101 excuses!). *Every consequence executed reinforces your authority for the next encounter!*

In other words, any leader worth his salt says what he means and means what he says.

I cannot over-emphasize the need to speak calmly and authoritatively. Yelling and nagging will only *diminish* your level of authority in your child’s eyes. Remember how your parent dealt with you? Sometimes, just an authoritative “look” is all it takes to get you moving!

If you need help in the area of overcoming the nagging habit, download the previous *Character-Wise* report on “How to Overcome the Nagging Habit”. Here’s the download link:

http://www.goodmonday.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/10801018/how_to_overcome_nagging_your_child.pdf

Fear #2: MY PARENT INSPECTS WHAT HE EXPECTS!

No child is so motivated that he does not need to be accountable to an adult.

The goal of parenting is to discipline my child to such a stage that she will do what is right especially when I am not around.

Wouldn't it be great if the child does what is right *automatically* on his own? If that is the case, we parents will be out of a job! This is not to say that the child will never grow up to become a responsible adult – it is just that the journey to get there requires plenty of parental leadership.

Parents become unnecessarily frustrated when they underestimate the tendency of the child to stray and deviate from assigned responsibilities. For example, just *telling* your child to clean up his room is insufficient if you do not include in details about your expectations, standards and deadline. People follow leaders who are very specific about what they want and when they want it. Children are no different.

Here's the tip: If your goal is for your child to fear you (especially when you are not around), you have to be very clear in your expectations and inspection when you *are* around.

- Use concise terms – instead of saying “*Please be good while in the store*”, say – “*I want you to walk next to me and do not touch anything without my permission,*”
- Affirm with incentives. One of the main life lessons we desire to sow in the life of the child is that we reap what we sow. Be attentive to encourage your child when you see the demonstration of consistent effort.
- Reinforce with correction. This is the other side of the coin – do not fall into the trap of popular parenting where only rewards are given to encourage right behavior. You must be willing to enforce consequences as well when there is an infraction. In fact, in the child's early years, there will be more situations of correction than reward – this is the season of investment – *sow well now and you will reap the harvest of a delightful child later on.*

Fear #3: MY PARENT IS MY SOURCE OF JOY!

Does your child enjoy your presence? Here's something for you to chew on :

If your child does not enjoy being with you, she will not want to please you when you are not with her.

The secret to effective parenting is to be a person of JOY. I have said it before – *character is more caught than taught*. When the child is so used to experiencing the joy of your presence and delight in being with you, he will be dismayed when he senses your disapproval or disappointment. In other words, you will want to parent your child to such a stage that *he wants to please you*.

If your child desires to please you, he will naturally fear and respect you as well.

Here's the tip: When was the last time you had spontaneous, uninhibited fun with your child? Or has life been reduced to just a series of co-curricular activities and you spend more time driving them around? Do consider being intentional and *habitual* about creating moments of joy:

- ✓ Have regular one-on-one “dates” doing what the child likes.
- ✓ Do a project together. It may mean getting out of your comfort zone – example, would you as a Dad be willing to build a doll house together with your daughter?
- ✓ Read an enjoyable book together or any other hobbies (video games do not qualify!).
- ✓ Have regular conversations where you spend more time listening (not nagging).
- ✓ Speak well of them in public and do not belittle them.