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***THE PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM***

***USING NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES***

Natural and logical consequences are used by many different experts and parenting programs because they are so effective. The good news for parents is that using natural and logical consequences is a very realistic and workable way to teach children positive behavior. It does not require a degree, or special training to learn how to apply natural or logical consequences to children's behavior. It does however, require action on the part of the parents. It also requires consistency and a willingness to try something different. Many parents report that they actually enjoy using consequences because it works without having to get into a heated uproar with children. Some parents also find that they can come up with some very creative and still effective ways to use consequences.

Once children have experienced using consequences to manage their behavior, they can predict the consequences of their other actions. They become more capable of making good judgements and predicting the outcome of their choices. They are even capable of cooperating and participating with their parents in determining appropriate consequences for their own misbehavior. Rather than being controlled or forced to behave, children discover that they have choices about their behavior. They usually will choose the behavior that results in the more pleasant or desirable outcome or consequence. If the child chooses to behave otherwise, the consequences and the problem is theirs, not their parents!

Deciding who owns the problem is another important aspect to managing behavior. Usually the person who owns the problem should be the one to do the most to come up with a solution. They may need the

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cooperation and support of someone else, but they can initiate the steps to solving the problem.

As an example, imagine that a child goes to school and forgets her lunch at home. Just before leaving for work the child's father discovers the child's lunch on the table. Who's problem is it?

There are three questions to ask in determining who owns the problem. The first question is, who is the behavior or situation interfering with directly? The next question is, who is making the complaint or bringing up the problem? The third question is, who's purpose is being disrupted or sidetracked. In this situation, the girl's forgetting her lunch interferes with her own eating. No one has raised a complaint yet. The girl's purpose of eating her lunch has been sidetracked by her forgetting her lunch.

What might normally happen in this household is for dad to take the lunch to the child. However, the natural consequence is for the child to go without eating and probably get hungry. The child is far more likely to learn to remember her lunch next time if she experiences the hunger this time, or the natural consequence of forgetting her lunch. If she goes hungry, remembering to bring her lunch will become more important to her. Her father does not need to make it his problem and take the lunch to her. If she is normal and healthy, she will not be harmed by missing lunch and being hungry.

Using this same situation, let's see what else could happen regarding the lunch. She might also come up with a solution to her lunch problem. She might share someone else's lunch, spend her own money for lunch, or even borrow money for lunch. Remember that it is up to the child to solve her problem. This gives the child the opportunity to learn how to solve problems on her own. She deserves to be congratulated for coming up with a solution and needs to respond to any consequences that arise from her solution. If she shares a friend's lunch she may need to return the favor. If she spends her own money, she has less money for other things she may want to buy

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later - her choice. If she borrows money, she needs to pay it back promptly.

Each of these situations allows the child to further problem solve and learn to be responsible. Parents can assist the child most by allowing and supporting the child in working towards solutions for their problems themselves. The child may need help or advice. Don't lecture the child, simply be kind and supportive. The parents ideally should have to take little action here. They may feel they need to, or strongly want to remind the child to repay the borrowed money or to share her lunch, but this will only teach the child to rely on the parents. The most they may want to do is to follow through by asking the girl at the end of the day if she repaid her friend. Congratulate her for being so responsible and taking care of her obligations if she did. If not, a logical consequence may need to be set up to help her remember to complete her obligation.

Other options could occur also. She might decide that in the future she really doesn't need to take a lunch because she doesn't really get hungry. Remember that the problem belongs to the child. If she is really not hungry, why should she eat? Some parents get overly concerned and try to find a problem where there doesn't have to be one. The child may choose to eat when she gets home from school. If her parents object because the child will then not be hungry for dinner they can establish a rule around that. If the child can eat a snack and still eat dinner, her parents need to consider if there really is any problem with that. If parents are honest with themselves, sometimes they find that the real problem is that they want to have things their way and to control the child. It is important for parents to realize that it is more important to find healthy and positive ways to deal with their children than to force their own way on their children.

It is always a good idea for parents to know for themselves why they have certain rules or ways of doing things. All childrens'

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questions about rules don't have to be answered, but when there isn't a good logical reason, maybe the rule isn't important any more.

"Because that is the way my parents did it", or, "Because that is the rule", are not logical reasons. Children grow and change, situations change, and rules need to change if they are to make sense and be reasonable. Where natural consequences will not work or are not appropriate for the situation, parents need to have logical rules and logical consequences if they want to raise disciplined children.

Before we continue with consequences let's cover rules and explanations a little more. The same rules do not necessarily apply to all children in the family and yet can be fair. A four year old may be required to hold an adults hand before crossing the street. A normal fourteen year old in the same family would be insulted if expected to follow the same rule. The situation is different. If the four year old complains about the rule and asks why the older sibling doesn't have to abide by it, they deserve a logical answer. "Because your brother is older", is not a logical answer. "Because your brother has had lots of practice crossing the street and can now do it safely by himself", is a logical answer. The parent can take this time to encourage the younger child by also saying something like, "We want you to be safe and we will help you practice crossing the street safely. When you have had a lot of practice, you too will be allowed to cross the street alone because you will know how to do it safely by yourself." A logical explanation like this combined with kindness, concern, and encouragement for the child helps the child to make internal decisions based on self-esteem and self-determination.

For consequences to be effective they need to be natural or logical. Natural consequences happen as an act of nature. Not eating and getting hungry are naturally related to each other. Parents don't have to do anything for the consequence to occur. Sometimes it is more desirable to use a logical consequence rather than a natural consequence. Natural consequences should not be used when the

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consequence is too likely to result in serious injury or harm. The natural consequence of playing on a busy street might be getting run over by a car and being severely injured or dying.

Sometimes the natural consequence will occur too far in the future to have a meaningful connection or to be used for learning. Not brushing teeth may lead to tooth decay, but that may not happen for years. At other times there are no natural consequences for an act. Then parents can set up logical consequences for the act.

A logical consequence must be related to the offense or misbehavior. A logical consequence for being disruptive during an activity is to lose the opportunity to participate in the activity. It is not a logical consequence for a child to lose the privilege of watching television because they were playing ball in the house and broke a vase. What does the television have to do with the ball or the vase? A more logical consequence would be for the child to have to clean up the mess from the broken vase, possibly have to replace or repair it and possibly have the use of the ball restricted or temporarily removed.

In establishing consequences, parents need to remember that the child needs to have an opportunity to demonstrate that they have learned how to behave appropriately. It is defeating the purpose to simply take the ball away for good. If the child has a chance of getting the ball back and playing with it appropriately, they are more motivated to change their behavior than if they never get a chance to correct the situation.

Consequences do not need to be large in order to be effective. Actually it is much better to start with small appropriate consequences. Big consequences usually actually become a way for the parent to punish the child and this again leads to resentment. The consequence should be a reminder to the child of what they need to do to correct the behavior. When the consequence is out of proportion to the mistake, the child will focus on the consequence as a punishment

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and be angry or resentful rather than focusing on changing their behavior. In establishing consequences, remember that it needs to be in proportion to the misbehavior.

If a consequence has been established for a reoccurring problem and it doesn't seem to be working to eliminate the problem behavior, don't give up or throw out that solution or consequence completely. Try making little changes first. Often little changes are all that is needed to make a difference in the results. It is like cooking stew and changing the recipe. The cook might have cooked meat and vegetables and decide that it doesn't taste right. The wise cook would not throw it out without first adding some salt or other seasonings to the stew to change the flavor. A wise parent may want to adjust the consequence a little to see if it then becomes effective. The consequence may not be strong enough. Parents who work with consequences for awhile learn how to set up consequences to be effective with their children.

Let's go back to the girl who forgets her lunch and do some more deciding about who has the problem and looking for solutions. Imagine that this girl continues to forget her lunch every day for one week. Mom complains that she goes to the trouble of making the lunch and then it gets ruined sitting on the counter all day and the food is thrown away and wasted. The girl makes no complaints about lunch or being hungry. Who has the problem now? Mom does. She is concerned about the food being wasted and her time wasted. How can she appropriately handle her problem, especially since it involves the girl too?

If the parent has the problem they can first try using "I messages" to solve the problem. There are four steps in sending an "I message". The first step names the behavior or the situation without any judgement. It usually begins with, "When you". The second step tells specifically how the parent feels about the situation. "I feel hurt..". The third step states the reason the speaker feels that way,

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based on how the behavior affects them. It begins with, "because". The fourth step states what the speaker wants to have done about it, using "I want or I would like".

The mother in the previous situation could state the, "I message" something like this: "When you don't take your lunch to school, I feel that I am wasting my time and food, because I am making your lunch and you don't eat it. I would like you to take your lunch to school and eat it." This may solve the problem and the child may remember to take her lunch and eat it. It may also start a discussion about the situation that will lead to some solution. The girl may tell her mother that she really doesn't want to take her lunch. This may be a possible solution because mom would not have to waste her time making a lunch and the food would not be wasted. If using the "I message" did not lead to a solution for the problem, then setting up a consequence may be in order.

There is a lot of room for individuality and creativity in setting up consequences. However, it is very important that the consequence be logically related to the situation or the misbehavior. For the use of consequences to work smoothly, it is important that the consequences not be used as threats or punishments. Parents should use friendly and supportive attitudes when applying consequences. If the parent is angry when they set or apply the consequence to the child, the parent's anger can be punishing to the child. If the parent is angry or upset they should wait until they have calmed down so that they can make a more logical and rational decision about how to apply the consequence.

Parents can discuss the problem with the child and ask the child what they think a logical consequence might be. Many times this type of discussion will resolve the problem itself. Children can be very direct and realistic and truly offer sound suggestions about consequences that are effective with their own behavior. If the child

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also participates in setting the consequence before hand, there is less trouble enforcing it later.

Parents need to maintain a friendly and supportive attitude with their children when discussing or applying consequences. Consequences work very well when they are logical and are enforced.

There is no need for parents to be angry, loud, or threatening when using consequences. This type of attitude or behavior from the parents actually suggests to the child that they are really being punished and the child will behave as though they are being punished.

Parents can give children choices regarding the consequence. This helps children to recognize that they choose their behavior and that the choices are followed by logical consequences. Choices may be worded as an "either-or choice" or a "when-then choice". For example, imagine a child is being disruptive and loud, interrupting a conversation the parents are having. The parent may give the child a choice by saying, "You may either play quietly here in this room or you may go into time out. You decide." In another example, imagine that a child has been asked to wash the dishes. The parent notices the child preparing to go outside to play and the dishes are not done. The parent can give the child a choice by saying, "When you have finished washing the dishes, then you may go outside to play." In either case, the child has been given a positive choice.

Now it is time for action. Give the choice only one time. If the child does not comply, then the parent needs to put the consequence into effect at that time. While enforcing the consequence, the parent can remain kind and but firm. They may need to escort the child to a chair for time out, or to their room. The parent may also say, "I'm sorry, but since you have not chosen to do the dishes, you have decided not to go out to play." This reinforces to the child that the consequence is a result of their choice and their actions. After the child has experienced the consequence once,

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they may be given the opportunity to show that they have changed their behavior.

For consequences to work best, parents need to be consistent. They need to maintain a supportive attitude towards the child and give the child one choice about their behavior. After that choice, parents need to take action yet remain firm but kind. Consequences must be either natural or logical to be effective.

Consequences should not be used as punishment or to force parents' will on children, but to teach children how to develop self-control over their own behavior.

**STUDY QUESTIONS - STUDY GUIDE TWELVE  
USING NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES**

1. Natural and logical consequences are used by many different parenting programs and experts because:
  - a) they are so easy
  - b) they can make money from them
  - c) they are so effective
  - d) they don't require parents to do anything
  
2. Once children have experienced using consequences to manage their own behavior they can predict \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) their parent's mood
  - b) their own mood
  - c) the consequences of their other actions
  - d) how the world functions
  
3. Children who learn from consequences become more capable of \_\_\_\_\_ and predicting the outcome of their choices.
  - a) making good choices
  - b) not making any mistakes
  - c) expressing themselves
  - d) none of the above
  
4. In using consequences, rather than being controlled or forced to behave, children discover:
  - a) that they do not have to behave at all
  - b) that they can easily manipulate their parents
  - c) how to over power their parents
  - d) that they have choices about their behavior

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5. Deciding who owns the problem is another important aspect to:
  - a) blaming the right person
  - b) managing behavior
  - c) behavior control
  - d) all of the above
  
6. Which is not one of the three questions to ask in determining who owns the problem?
  - a) who is the behavior or situation interfering with directly
  - b) who is making the complaint
  - c) who started the situation
  - d) whose purpose is being disrupted or sidetracked
  
7. In the example given in the study guide, what would be the natural consequence for the girl who forgot her lunch?
  - a) having to write an essay about forgetting her lunch
  - b) being hungry
  - c) getting a spanking
  - d) there is no natural consequence
  
8. When a child learns how to solve problems on his own the parents need to:
  - a) make sure the solution is agreeable with them
  - b) not allow children to solve their own problems
  - c) congratulate them
  - d) criticize the solution
  
9. Children need to \_\_\_\_\_ any consequences that arise from their solutions to problems.
  - a) avoid
  - b) do nothing with
  - c) respond to
  - d) all of the above
  
10. Children learn to be responsible when parents allow and support the child in:
  - a) working towards solutions for their problems themselves
  - b) not making mistakes
  - c) getting help with all of their problems
  - d) avoiding problem situations
  
11. If parents are honest with themselves sometimes they find that the real problem is that they want to have things their way and to:
  - a) be the most important person in the family
  - b) not have anything to do with their child
  - c) control the child
  - d) all of the above

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12. It is important for parents to realize that it is more important to find healthy and positive ways to deal with their children than:
- a) to get along with their children
  - b) to force their own way on their children
  - c) none of the above
  - d) all of the above
13. "Because this is the way my parents did it", is \_\_\_\_\_ to give to children.
- a) a good explanation
  - b) a logical reason
  - c) the best explanation
  - d) not a logical reason
14. Children grow and change, situations change, and rules need to \_\_\_\_\_ if they are to make sense and be reasonable.
- a) always stay the same
  - b) change
  - c) always be very strictly enforced
  - d) established by the parents without question
15. Parents need to have \_\_\_\_\_ if they want to raise logical children.
- a) many strict rules
  - b) very few and simple rules
  - c) common sense
  - d) logical rules and logical consequences
16. For consequences to be effective they need to be:
- a) simple
  - b) natural or logical
  - c) common sense
  - d) enforced with punishment
17. \_\_\_\_\_ consequences happen as an act of nature.
- a) logical
  - b) reasonable
  - c) serious
  - d) natural
18. When natural consequences might result in serious injury or harm, then \_\_\_\_\_ should be used.
- a) punishment
  - b) no consequence
  - c) logical consequences
  - d) behavioral control
19. When there are no natural consequences for an act, parents:

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- a) should use punishment
  - b) should use no consequence
  - c) should use a logical consequence
  - d) should use behavioral control
20. A logical consequence must be related to:  
\_\_\_\_\_ a) the child  
b) the offense or misbehavior  
c) some sort of punishment  
d) a negative activity
21. Which is a logical consequence for breaking a vase?  
a) loosing the privilege of watching television  
b) getting a spanking  
c) cleaning up the vase and possibly replacing it  
d) having Nintendo taken away
22. Parents need to remember that the child needs to have an opportunity to demonstrate \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) that they know what the consequence is  
b) that they are good some of the time  
c) that they have learned how to behave appropriately  
d) that they can change the rules
23. Consequences \_\_\_\_\_ in order to be effective.  
a) do not need to be large  
b) must be complicated  
c) must only be small  
d) do not need to be logical
24. Big consequences usually become a way for the parent to \_\_\_\_\_ the child and this leads to resentment.  
a) spank  
b) punish  
c) correct  
d) defeat
25. The consequences should be a reminder to the child of what they:  
a) did wrong  
b) need to do to correct the behavior  
c) how bad their behavior is  
d) how the parent feels about the child
26. In establishing consequences, remember that the consequence needs to be in \_\_\_\_\_ to the misbehavior.  
a) alignment

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- b) proportion
  - c) reality
  - d) none of the above
27. If a consequence doesn't seem to be working to correct the behavior, the parent may want to \_\_\_\_\_ rather than throw out the consequence entirely.
- a) give up on that behavior
  - b) use punishment along with the consequence
  - c) make the consequence very harsh
  - d) make little adjustments in the consequence
28. The first step in using an "I message":
- a) names the behavior or situation without any judgement
  - b) tells how the speaker feels
  - c) states what the speaker wants to have done
  - d) states whose fault the problem is
29. The fourth step in using "I messages":
- a) names the behavior or situation without any judgement
  - b) tells how the speaker feels
  - c) states what the speaker want to have done
  - d) states whose fault the problem is
30. If the parent is angry or upset, they should \_\_\_\_\_ about how to apply a consequence.
- a) wait until they have calmed down and can make a more logical and rational decision
  - b) decide to use punishment instead of worry
  - c) restrict the child until they decide
  - d) all of the above