

Natural Consequences

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 29 July, 2003 - 10:20

First published in the paper journal, *Taking Children Seriously*, way back in TCS **22**, the purpose of this article was to show that what parenting experts call “natural consequences” are no such thing, and that what these experts are really advocating is punishing children and denying responsibility for the resulting distress that their children feel. Whether TCS or not, many parents find the idea of such dishonesty alarming. For those who are interested, I then go on to explain what a TCS parent would consider a real natural consequence.

Unnatural Consequences

Sarah Fitz-Claridge (<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>)

Most modern parenting books advocate using so-called ‘natural consequences’ to punish children, and devote much space to describing the relevant techniques. They don’t *call* it punishment – indeed the technique itself requires one to *deny* that it is punishment – but it is something unpleasant that the parent is to decide should happen to the child when the child’s behaviour deviates from the parent’s wishes. So anyone who uses language decently would call it punishment.

Why else would they need to write a hundred pages on the subject, giving instructions for how to “employ” natural consequences? If they were indeed natural, there would be no need to explain in great detail how to “step back and allow the child to experience the natural consequences of his own actions”. Otherwise known as wilfully standing back to let the crap fall on the unfortunate child, in order to “teach the little blighter a lesson he richly deserves,” if I may make their implicit reasoning explicit.

Instead of standing back to let the crap fall, or when that doesn’t work, positioning it above the child’s head too (yes, that is indeed what they are implicitly advocating),

we should be looking out for such dangers, and giving the child the information and assistance he needs to avoid such unpleasant consequences.

But the main thing to remember about so-called ‘natural consequences’ is that they do not follow! For example, contrary to what it says in four parenting books I have read, it simply does not follow from the fact that a child wakes up ‘late,’ that the natural consequence of that is that he

- Must walk to school, or
- Must go to school in his night-clothes, or
- Must miss school and suffer the resulting punishment meted out by school, or
- Must go to school without any breakfast

(Interesting that the experts do not agree on what exactly the ‘natural consequence’ of ‘late’ waking is.)

The fact is, none of these alleged natural consequences follows necessarily from the so-called ‘late’ waking. Nature allows any number of things to happen, and none of them has this special status of being The Natural Consequence. Yet despite their differences, all the so-called ‘natural consequences’ advocated in these books have a number of features in common: they are to be chosen by the parent; they are to be unpleasant for the child; and they are to be set up in such a way as to delude the child into thinking that the parent is not the active agent in the matter. They are, therefore, a strategy for denying responsibility for pain for which the parent is in fact responsible.

So what can be called a “natural consequence” reasonably?

Something that happens *despite* the parent's real (non-coercive) attempts to prevent it.

For example, suppose Little Billy is in a nice restaurant with his mother, and he starts playing with the sugar lumps and the salt and pepper shakers. Suppose that Billy had specifically asked that they go to this particular restaurant, despite having full knowledge of the sort of behaviour that would be expected at this place, instead of to a more relaxed place where children are welcomed and not expected to ‘behave’. Suppose that Mum and Billy are being eyed disapprovingly by a rather snotty waiter, who is clearly of the opinion that children should never be permitted to enter ‘his’ establishment, let alone to have a bit of fun with a few sugar lumps.

Mum, a TCS parent rather than a believer in using so-called ‘natural consequences’ to ‘teach’ her child things, will be giving Billy information (in a non-coercive, non-threatening way) about what might happen if he continues making salt piles and sugar-lump-castles. If Mum is the sort of person who feels uneasy in such a situation, perhaps because she dislikes confrontation, this is part of the information she will be giving Billy. Unless we tell children what we want and how we feel, they cannot possibly take our wishes into account. Mum will be assuming that Billy will want to take her embarrassment into account, and she will be conveying it accurately. As a TCS parent, Mum might be questioning whether her unease is really justified, and she might try to think her way out of such feelings, and she will probably be telling her child that her unease might not be reasonable, but she will not pretend to feel fine if she doesn't.

Whether she feels uneasy or not, Mum will be giving Billy information, and (assuming that he is getting so much out of his activities that he wants to continue) making suggestions about what they might do in any particular eventuality. She might point out, for example, that the waiter appears to disapprove of Billy's activities. She might warn Billy that the waiter might order them to leave, or that he might demand, as a condition of their staying, that Mum stop Billy's activities, or that he might ask Billy to stop (though this last seems less likely). Mum might tell Billy that if the waiter says any of these things he might use a harsh tone of voice – or perhaps the waiter might just continue to give them the evil eye but not say anything. Or he might give up the evil eye stuff.

The TCS parent will be telling the child what the likely possibilities are, to ensure that Billy does not get a nasty surprise. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the manager might come over and comment on what a charming child Billy is and give him a giant box of sugar lumps to play with. Such things do happen in real life, as many a TCS parent can tell you. How other people feel about a child playing with sugar lumps depends to a surprisingly large extent on whether or not he and his parent seem relaxed and happy rather than on the verge of making a loud and fraught scene. Worth bearing in mind!

Assuming Billy continued playing with the sugar lumps, Mum will be thinking about

1. whether what Billy is doing might adversely affect anyone else (e.g., other diners, or the owner of the restaurant) – we want to do the right thing;
2. how to lessen the risk of something unpleasant or embarrassing happening;
3. what to do to minimise the chance that any unpleasantness on the part of the waiter or manager might affect Billy adversely.

For example, could Mum disarm the waiter by briefly engaging him in friendly conversation? Or could she have a quiet word with the waiter to change his perception of the situation (to give him a reason not to disapprove of the child's activities)?

If those and any other attempts to lessen the risk of something unpleasant or embarrassing happening fail, and indeed while she is thinking up and making such attempts, she will be talking to Billy about the situation and in no way making him feel bad about it. If the waiter seems to be behaving unreasonably, Mum might, for example, whisper something to Billy about what an idiot the waiter is, and they might make quiet little jokes about the waiter – in order to assure Billy that the waiter's completely unreasonable disapproval does not matter a jot, and should not be distressing.

In any event, Mum will be thinking about how to help Billy interpret the waiter's disapproval in a non-distressing, non-coerced way. Unlike pre-TCS parents, she will not be buying in to the waiter's view of the situation. That is what would cause distress for the child. The waiter's own attempts to intimidate the child are much less likely to harm the child, because the child is not in a relationship with the waiter, and there is no significant moral issue at stake between the child and the restaurant. The child need have no particular wish not to displease him if he is being unreasonable. So Mum is likely to make as light of the situation as she can, helping Billy to “see the funny side of it,” and she will probably suggest that they go to another restaurant (a really super restaurant from Billy's point of view) and she will then be pointing out happily that they will now have been to two restaurants instead of one, and perhaps she might tell Billy about meals in which the diners take their aperitifs at one place, their soup at another, their *hors d'œuvres* at a third restaurant, their entrees at a fourth, and so on.

The point is, what Mum will not be doing is sitting back and letting the crap fall on Billy, to teach him table etiquette, and then telling him that it is his own fault and nothing to do with her! She will be going to great lengths to help him to interpret the affair in a positive way. She will know that Billy is now perfectly well aware that playing with the salt and sugar lumps is frowned upon in some restaurants, and that intentionally distressing him will not add to his knowledge.

But what if Mum was able to disarm the waiter with a friendly conversation, and perhaps a tip, before Billy had even had the chance to notice his intimidating frowns? *How would he learn anything then?*, you might ask.

Mum can simply mention her conversation with the waiter to Billy, explaining what she did and why it was necessary. And she can explain to Billy that in some restaurants, such-and-such behaviour is expected, and behaviours such as sugar-lump-castle-building and salt-pile-making are frowned upon. She can (and should) simply explain all this – give Billy access to her best theories about restaurants. He needs to know these things. But coercion adds nothing at all; it just spoils everything. Hurting children doesn't teach them anything good.

So where, in such situations, is there a real natural consequence – that is to say, an unpleasant consequence we might reasonably call “natural”? The answer is that if, given all Mum's efforts, the waiter were to ask them to leave the restaurant, *that* might reasonably be called a natural consequence. In other words, a TCS natural consequence would be an unfortunate consequence that occurs despite the best efforts to prevent it. No good can come of it – at least, no more than from any other disaster – and it is something that we should try absolutely to avoid.

to post comments

Comments

Logic

Submitted by Collin Dyas on 29 July, 2003 - 14:41

Interesting post. Why do some parents think using natural consequences will help their kids? Is nature a better teacher than the parents? Maybe so. Parents who believe in employing natural consequences are not usually

consistent and logical in this. They don't let their kids learn from the natural consequence of running into the street or drinking bleach.

[to post comments](#)

Re: Logic

Submitted by Pokemamma on 29 July, 2003 - 15:04

"Parents who believe in employing natural consequences are not usually consistent and logical in this. They don't let their kids learn from the natural consequence of running into the street or drinking bleach."

Well duh.

[to post comments](#)

Natural consequences

Submitted by Pokemamma on 29 July, 2003 - 15:08

Parents have a duty to teach their kids and if they can use natural consequences to do it that's good. Natural consequences work well because they fit the crime.

[to post comments](#)

Assumptions

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 29 July, 2003 - 15:45

One of the problems with employing so-called natural consequences is that the parent bases consequences on their own assumptions and their own learned suppositions. "See, I told you the waiter would yell at you for playing with those sugar lumps!" If they were yelled at by waiters or parents or patrons for playing with sugar lumps, they may assume the same will happen for their child twenty years later, and thereby be expecting the same result. It is more reasonable, given the uniqueness of personal experience and learning, to think about and share possible things that might happen, theoretically, and then see, together what does evolve. Mutual learning rather than rote reinforcement of parental beliefs.

Assumptions about what will happen next are influential on thinking and action and are also often wrong. This is especially true when trying to guess human behavior in response to something a child is doing rather naturally in a public place. Playing with sugar lumps, for example. There could be a number of possible scenarios, all affected by the circumstances, the degree of assumptions held, and those involved.

On the other hand, it is certain that true nature will be either more or less variable than waiters, parents, patrons, and children. The natural consequences of standing in front of an oncoming tornado are different than the sugar lump scenario. Most of us would advise strongly to get out of the way as soon as possible. If there were not time to assess theories about tornados we would just choose our best guess and quickly act on it.

Waiters and sugar lump play we share theories about. We might even ask the waiter what he or she thinks, and if so get quite different answers depending on the waiter, our children, ourselves, the sugar lumps, our fellow diners, the restaurant, and the time of day. It could all be quite interesting and informative as a natural consequence of the whole scenario.

to post comments

I disagree with this. Natural...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 30 July, 2003 - 06:22

I disagree with this. Natural consequences must be better than UNnatural ones.

to post comments

That's the point.

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 30 July, 2003 - 16:14

What many or most people call 'natural' consequences are really UNnatural.

to post comments

not the whole point

Submitted by Elliot Temple on 30 July, 2003 - 16:40

if a consequence would be 'natural' if the parent did nothing, then the parent does nothing, that is neglect.

-- Elliot Temple <http://curi.blogspot.com/> (<http://curi.blogspot.com/>).

to post comments

Inmates Running the Asylum

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 30 July, 2003 - 21:53

Came here via Carnival of the Vanities. I have never seen parenthood deconstructed quite like this before. Little Billy seems to have free rein to act like a toad while Mum navel-gazes about triangulating sensibilities among herself, Billy and the waiter. Am I so out of the loop as to be wrong in thinking an old-fashioned, "Billy, knock it off or we're leaving - we don't do that here" is the correct response? And to follow through with the threat if the behavior continues? Failure to teach a child right and wrong is pure neglect and is far worse than using coercion to enforce such teachings. Attempts to justify it via theoretical posturing don't change that.

to post comments

Right and wrong

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 30 July, 2003 - 22:07

Actually, TCS is all about teaching right and wrong. It's new-fashioned parenting. Sometimes old ideas evolve and improve!

TCS says there's a better way than force AND a better way than permissive neglect. Most people just can't believe that it's not a choice between the two.

Alice

http://libertarian_parent_in_the_countryside.blogspot.com/

(http://libertarian_parent_in_the_countryside.blogspot.com/).

to post comments

I found this at > Carnival of the Vanities

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 31 July, 2003 - 01:41

If I had carefully taught my child how to behave in a restaurant like that, and he continued to play with the sugar lumps, something along the lines of "Knock it off, we have been over this, continue, and we will go home for dinner." would seem quite appropriate. Since TCS places such an emphasis on explaining complex social interaction to children, such teachings must take some time to learn. Surely there must be a point where some mild force or appropriate threats are needed. Besides, if a waiter "disapproves" of my kids, he isn't getting much of a tip.

to post comments

Sugar lumps

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 31 July, 2003 - 15:03

For goodness sake, what's wrong with playing with sugar lumps? Why do you think kids want to play with them anyway? Are restaurants really as interesting places for little kids as they are for adults? Or do they get dragged along when they don't especially want to go? Try my tip: take a Game Boy next time if you have to eat somewhere that restrictive.

And, be reasonable!

Alice

to post comments

Sugar Lumps

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 31 July, 2003 - 18:37

Absolutely! Be reasonable! As a parent of three small children, I would never take them into a place where I thought their behavior would be inappropriately disruptive in the first place. And were I to miscalculate and find that they were annoying others around us, I would not hesitate to, as we say in my family, give them the hook (i.e.,leave). It would appear that the example rejects the notion that parents have a responsibility to society to keep their children from making pests of themselves. (Yes, I believe that in many situations, children should be seen and not heard and in many others, they shouldn't even be seen.) Granted, that wasn't the point of the discussion, but it is an integral part of raising children nonetheless. If little Billy wants to play with sugar cubes, let him do it at home.

[to post comments](#)

Children should be seen and not heard?

Submitted by Erin on 1 August, 2003 - 04:53

A reader wrote that children should be seen and not heard, and kept from making pests of themselves. I am assuming that this is because certain people do not wish to see or hear or interact with children, and find the entire process annoying or distasteful. And yes, this is true. Some people dislike children. As well, many people do not want to see or hear or interact with: the elderly, persons with 'handicaps', overweight people, ugly people, poor people, people of a specific race, and a whole bunch of others. So would it be fair to say that these people have a responsibility to keep themselves out of sight, or at the very least be seen and not heard, so as to not annoy anybody?

[to post comments](#)

Children and Others

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 1 August, 2003 - 12:53

Uh, Erin - take a deep breath and read it again. As a parent, I am chin deep in the day to day, hurly-burly, noisy, sticky, dirty chaotic world of my children - and I love every minute of it. What I was talking about was not inflicting this on OTHER people who, yes, choose not to participate in it, in specific and understood public settings. It seems to me that any person going, for example, to a concert, a museum, an art film or (as in this instance) an upscale restaurant, has a not unreasonable expectation of peace and quiet. The same person going to, say, an amusement park, a kid's movie or a kiddie-friendly restaurant, cannot reasonably have this same expectation in such settings. In choosing to avoid taking my children to places where their actions would cause an UNREASONABLE disturbance, I am simply trying to be polite. Also, if you can't see the difference between the way one treats children and the way one treats adults (whatever their race, age, physical or economic condition),

well, you'll never really understand what I'm talking about.

[to post comments](#)

Children and Others

Submitted by Erin on 1 August, 2003 - 19:28

A reader wrote "if you can't see the difference between the way one treats children and the way one treats adults...". Well, see, that's kind of the point. I can see the difference, I just disagree with it.

As to people's reasonable expectation of peace and quite, I would first like to know how a child playing with sugar cubes at his own table would conflict with that? I really don't think that quietly playing with sugar cubes is disruptive.

As well, what do you think of people with tourettes inflicting themselves on other people? I have attended university lectures and movies when a person with tourettes was present, and can assure you that many people found it quite disruptive. Should they abstain from going to places they may not be welcome, or is it different for them because they're adults?

If it is different for adults, could you please explain why it is OK for adults to be disruptive, but not children?

[to post comments](#)

O'cmon

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 2 August, 2003 - 14:49

O'cmon.

This is sugar lumps people. sugar lumps!

God forbid a child would play with his knife and fork, or swing his feet under the table.

Or make funny noises while chewing his food. Or draw on a paper napkin. Restaurants, restaurant goers, get a life!

If little Billy is crawling from table to table, tying peoples shoelaces together, tripping waiters, drawing with lasagna on the walls, then we've probably found the wrong place to go for dinner. O' but forgot for a minute that we're at Sam's Pizza Joint and its self serve.

Nevertheless.

I carry my own sugar lumps. Puzzles too.

Be creative. But most restaurants are not the pristine bastions of haute couture we seem to be making them out as. Waiters have real lives too, and more than often they understand that children can get bored just playing miss manners adult food games.

Or not. Restaurants that are not in the land of grinchdom can be fun for everyone. However, it is hard to find places that have good sugar lumps anymore.

[to post comments](#)

Sergeant Pokemamma of the Ignorance Police

Submitted by Alan Forrester on 2 August, 2003 - 19:15

Pokemamma wrote:

Parents have a duty to teach their kids and if they can use natural consequences to do it that's good. Natural consequences work well because they fit the crime.

I see, so ignorance is now a crime to be punished by luring your child into a trap and then allowing it to snap shut and hurt him in a manner that you deem to be fitting.

And of course, one could never do anything silly, like, oh, say, have a rational discussion with a child and explain what you think would happen if the child did thing X that you think is unwise. That would result in the child learning rather than suffering for the crime of ignorance and we can't have that, can we? Even worse, it might turn out that you are wrong about the issue concerned and then you might have to learn something.

to post comments

Just say Nockit off.

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 5 August, 2003 - 23:27

The child will do what you enforce. The natural state is burtal and mean. It is a perents job to Civilize thier children. That includes table manners.

to post comments

ho hum

Submitted by Elliot Temple on 6 August, 2003 - 05:17

Since you approve of people civilising those they see as "brutal and mean" I presume you will accept my rules for you?

-- Elliot Temple <http://curi.blogspot.com/> [\(http://curi.blogspot.com/\)](http://curi.blogspot.com/)

to post comments

natural consequences

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 9 August, 2003 - 19:38

so if little billy smacks his brother on the head with a stick and hurts him what do you do then? obviously not in the restaurant! how does tcr deal with stuff like that? i am interested, not trying to criticise. in my house currently the attacker says sorry kisses it better and if a bad offence might spend some time alone. reading some stuff above i guess i am doing it wrong

to post comments

re: natural consequences

Submitted by Elliot Temple on 10 August, 2003 - 00:06

none of those things (say sorry; kiss bruise; spend time in isolation) solve the hitting problem. what parents need to do is figure out **why** billy smacks his brother.

-- Elliot Temple <http://curi.blogspot.com/> (<http://curi.blogspot.com/>).

to post comments

Here is my question

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 21 August, 2003 - 00:23

If I don't approve of Billy playing with the sugar lumps at the table, do I not have the right to teach him that the appropriate behaviour in said restaurant is to NOT play with the sugar lumps? The example seems to assume that Mum doesn't mind Billy playing with the sugar lumps, and Mum is simply trying to educate him about the fact that others might and what might happen as a result of that. But if I don't approve of Billy playing with the sugar lumps, and I HAVE brought a deck of cards, or drawing pad, or some other activity to occupy him during the wait, and he continues with the sugar lumps, what then?

to post comments

How to explain a real natural consequence to child

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 24 August, 2003 - 04:13

I love this viewpoint! I have never been against spanking, because I never saw any of the alternatives as better. I thought natural consequences was, but after having used it, I discovered it to be exactly what the author describes it as. As I see my 3 yr. old mimic any form of discipline we use on him, when he interacts with his 2 younger sisters, natural consequences kind of lost its appeal about the time he would step on them and tell them that was the "natural consequence" of not getting out of his way, or watching something dangerous fall on their heads without even telling them it was there. The worst was his overall attitude of not wanting to help anyone out, as obviously if something was hurting them, it was a natural consequence of what they had done. Anytime anyone is hurting, it's their own fault, and you should never help anyone out. I would much rather him learn to help everyone out that he can, whether it is their own fault or not. Anyway, I just found this website today and I love it! I have been looking for something like it for over a month now. I have had the idea of parenting in the back of my mind that a parent should never be the source of discomfort for a child. It sabotages the bond of trust that is there. If there is no trust, how can you teach them. I have had good results implementing these ideas when I remember to, and even have

had them "miraculously" work as a last resort after I have tried all else. It is hard for me to believe each time they work, due to the fact that I am still mired in the concept that a child won't be good unless we hold something over their heads. Because I don't always use this approach, I have desperately been looking for something concrete like this. Something to testify that other parents have treaded these otherwise culturally untreaded watters. I am so glad I found this site!

So my question is, what do you do if there is a dire consequence for a behaviour, and the consequence is beyond the child's grasp of reality? We have little or no money. If a child wastes food, there is no more to give him. If my child makes the electric bill too high by standing in the fridge door all day, and we can't pay the bill, the electricity will be turned off. These are concepts my children have a hard time grasping, but that I don't want them to have to learn through true natural consequences. Please help!

to post comments

Unnatural Consequences

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 1 September, 2003 - 20:18

When will Mum eat, I wonder... And she is clearly modelling lovely behaviour by sniggering about the idiot waiter. She is not allowing crap falling on her son, but on the restaurant floor. Rubbish - utter rubbish.

to post comments

pokemama

Submitted by surfmom on 3 September, 2003 - 18:10

If you don't like this style of parenting, why are you here?

to post comments

Its about autonomy and respect, I think

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 25 September, 2003 - 03:45

I'm not a TCS'er (although I'm currently reading about nonviolent communication and trying to apply it to parenting) but I think the commenter who asked "don't I have a right to teach my child X..." is unaware that TCS is based on the idea that the child has a right to autonomy and respect that precludes the parent forcing ("teaching") something like table manners. I'm having a struggle with this concept myself, as I was raised in an authoritarian way and my natural parenting impulses are authoritarian. I'm not sure yet how far I am willing to let go vis-a-vis controlling my child, but I know I have to radically rethink my parenting. I can see that yelling and timeouts and losing my temper and forcing my child to do things has not only damaged our relationship, but has already started shaping her way of interacting with others. I am saddened but determined to change myself so that my children grow up feeling respected and good about themselves and have an automatic response to others that is based on respect and empathy.

-Hope www.appalachia-alumni-association.net (<http://www.appalachia-alumni-association.net>)

[to post comments](#)

TCS = Child Abuse

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 4 October, 2003 - 14:52

The mistaken assumption here is that the issue is whether or not it is OK for the child to "play with the sugar lumps" NOW - it is not. The object of parenting is to teach life skills that the child will use once he has become an adult. And that is what parenting is all about - helping the child reach adulthood safely and with the skills necessary to function in the real world with other adults. The opposition of the TCS cultists to allowing children to experience the natural consequences of their actions is based on their focus on the NOW, instead of the future when their children will be unleashed on an unforgiving world. Sure, it is often painful and difficult to do your job as a parent - who wants to see their children suffer? - but if you don't show them the consequences of their actions you are simply abdicating your responsibilities as a parent and delaying their pain until they are adults and unprepared for it. If you allow your child to feel small amounts of the unpleasantness that bad behavior will create for them, you not only teach them skills NOW, you prepare them for the real world where their mommy is no longer there to protect them. I am not just speaking out of my hat. I am a parent, but I have also interviewed, hired and fired dozens of young people over the past two decades, many of whom apparently came from homes with the parenting style advocated here. They are unable to discipline themselves to do things they don't want to do, can not handle criticism, and run away from unpleasant situations rather than facing them directly. The real world is a harsh, cold unforgiving place, and sending your kids out into it without an understanding of the behavior and self-discipline required to survive in it is no less than child abuse. Children ARE different from adults and need to be treated as such. This is not being disrespectful of the child as an individual - failing to see and meet the unique needs of a child is the ultimate disrespect. It is your job as a parent to teach. If a child's ability to reason and decide were fully formed, your job would not exist, and our children would crawl away from the womb able to fully function like some lower members of the animal kingdom. If you tell an adult not to touch the hot stove because he will get burned, the adult's reasoning processes are fully developed enough that he will decide not to touch it. But anyone who has been around children knows you can TELL a child about the consequences of touching that stove until you are blue in the face, but eventually he will have to touch it to learn the lesson. I have intentionally allowed my kids to touch the front of the stove door after warning them - the door is hot enough to cause pain, but not to inflict permanent damage. I don't enjoy seeing my kids suffer even that small amount of pain, but by BEING A GROWNUP and doing something I find difficult, I am minimizing the chance that my child will end up in the emergency room with serious burns because he didn't really understand the consequences of his actions. If our society were some Utopian place where everyone was nice to everyone else and rules for proper behavior did not exist, this parenting method MIGHT be appropriate. However, this is not what our society is like, and by failing to do the hard parts of your job as a parent, you are failing both your child and our society.

[to post comments](#)

i don't get it

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 6 October, 2003 - 23:19

so suffering and doing things that suck NOW promote responsibility and later flourishing how?

-- Elliot

to post comments

Balance?

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 10 October, 2003 - 13:28

Before I say anything, I should point out that I believe firmly in treating children with the same level of respect that one would have for another adult that I was living with such as a spouse (Obviously removing the sexual aspects!) or adult sibling.

It seems to me that there balance may be needed in terms of "natural" consequences. I think that contriving natural consequences, such as (in this example) privately asking the waiter to tell you to get out of the restaurant to help teach the kid manners!, would be wrong... but I don't think children should be sheltered from the logical acceptable consequences of actions (obviously not involving death or injury!),

especially if they have been forewarned.

I also think that this may apply to household "chores" issues. For example, I don't think it's any more fair for the parent to be forced to do the dishes than it is for the child to be forced. So if the antural consequence of no one feeling like doing the dishes alone is that all the dishes are too dirty to use, it does seem like it would be a natural and acceptable consequence for the parent to say, "Well, there aren't any clean dishes and I don't feel like washing any, so for dinner we're just going to eat stuff I can find around the house that doesn't need to be cooked, like fruit and granola bars and green beans out of the can with our fingers and eat cold cereal out of the box." That's what I'd do at home if there *weren't* any kids and I didn't feel like doing dishes. I got through years without a kitchen that way...

Or for the reader who points out that the electricity might be cut off... as long as the whole family had talked ahead of time about that possibility, it seems fair to expose the children to the reality of that situation when it arises.

I came from a house that disciplined heavily, and enforced chores, and so forth... and I can say that I learned far more when at 18 I was thrown out on my own resources than I did while at home. Mightn't it be better to help children learn to navigate real-world problems as real-world companions than to entirely "cover for" them within the home? . . . better to learn while you have a parent-helper than to be forced to learn when eventually you are on your own for whatever reason. Anyway, it just seems that failing to allow certain natural consequences might be creating a fantasy world that is just as abusive in some ways as the fantasy world created by traditional parents who give the impression that there will always be parents there to make one's decisions for one and punish one for getting out of line. Either way fosters *dependence* on the parent to help teh child avoid really significant decision making -- either by takign the decision away, or affecting its outcome.

M-

to post comments

ummmmmmm

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 10 October, 2003 - 18:59

If it's possible to avoid a bad consequence, then it's **not** a logical or natural consequence. It's a consequence for kids with negligent or cruel parents only.

-- Elliot

[to post comments](#)

Another natural consequence

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 26 November, 2003 - 23:14

After having raised three children, I've come to the conclusion that one "natural consequence" that really IS natural is this: if the child (or anyone, really) does something disruptive, annoying, irresponsible, or in some other way not OK, one natural consequence is that the people around him/her get peeved and complain, refuse to have anything to do with the child for a bit, even yell and shout if the child's behavior is irritating enough. I've always been puzzled by the idea that the natural consequence has to be a physical or mechanical effect, when most of our motivations do in fact come from the responses of those around us.

[to post comments](#)

Absolutely- the natural conse...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 19 February, 2004 - 21:24

Absolutely- the natural consequence to playing with the salt/pepper shaker ultimately is that the parent will not be taking the child out to a restaurant anymore. I believe that parents have a tendency to protect their children- rather than allow them to feel embarrassment, shame, and humility- all feelings that will naturally correct behavior. If a child is never allowed to feel those emotions, there never is a consequence. ALSO- a consequence is NOT the same as a punishment...for example, the child that forgets a coat at home and doesn't have a coat for recess at school. The natural consequence is that the child goes out for recess without the coat. This may not be viewed as bad to the child- it entirely depends on them. It is still very possible to learn from a consequence that is positive, rather than negative.

[to post comments](#)

You have a point, but

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 26 March, 2004 - 12:13

"So what can be called a "natural consequence" reasonably? Something that happens despite the parent's real (non-coercive) attempts to prevent it."

I totally agree, but in this Billy story how much effort on Mom's part is enough? We don't know how old Billy is but if he is old enough to "specifically ask that they go to this particular restaurant" anything after

"The TCS parent will be telling the child what the likely possibilities are, to ensure that Billy does not get a nasty surprise."

seems unnecessary.

[to post comments](#)

Julie Robinson

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 15 May, 2004 - 18:11

"Either/Or"

The arguments are amusingly dualistic. My understanding of the world around me is that we do in fact deal with the "natural consequences", or "cultural consequences", or "relevant consequences", as adults in our daily lives. Shouldn't we assist our children in understanding this? At the same time, I appreciate that they are taken too far, that we tend to imbue explanations of "natural" consequences with our own subjective understandings, so therefore they are not presented truthfully to the child. I love the idea of parenting more creatively, giving my child and communities of children more opportunities to explore their actions honestly, but consequences of a sort, in my opinion, do exist. For example, a child/teen will have to explain their lateness to someone, at some point in their lives, and/or accept the consequence of not doing so. Sleeping in and missing an engagement of some sort, say, on the day that they had made a commitment to accompany their dear friend to the doctor, is going to cause distress. That is a sort of natural consequence; they will have to own up in, or not, either way, they will have to manage a consequence of some sort.

That's my two cents--however many months late I am on this debate. (Just came across the website as I research non-coersive schooling)

[to post comments](#)

Julie Robinson

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 15 May, 2004 - 18:15

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to post comments

Touching a hot stove

Submitted by Amanda on 18 May, 2004 - 06:32

is not the only way for a child to learn that it's hot. You call letting a child get burned being a "grown-up"?! How about holding a curious child close enough to a burner to feel the warmth and get the basic idea, without actually burning their finger? Worked with my kids. No one's ever been burned. And I didn't have to beat them into obeying either.

to post comments

TCS = Child abuse - what the....?!

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 19 May, 2004 - 12:43

Hey I don't claim to be an authority on TCS, I'm hardly an expert though it is something that has been part of my life since I was a child and now as a parent.I just wanted to comment on the ludicrous statements made in particular by one "reader" who purported that TCS = Child abuse...?!

"Sure, it is often painful and difficult to do your job as a parent - who wants to see their children suffer? - but if you don't show them the consequences of their actions you are simply abdicating your responsibilities as a parent and delaying their pain until they are adults and unprepared for it."

I had thought the TCS parent in the story had gone to great lengths to come up with many of the consequences, many more than perhaps you would be prepared to try and find? So in reality the TCS parent does the job of showing consequences more accurately and more fully than average. I had thought she had explored the topic at length, little Billy was well informed and regardless of the outcome he would come away from that situation with a lot of information. A parent who does none of this is the parent who is "abdicating" their "responsibility". The parents who contrive consequences that are not logical, the parents who are downright cruel about how they treat their kids - they are the ones with the problems....and they are the abusers. Telling Billy to "knock it off", threatening him with "we will leave and not come back"...they are the EASY way out. It is your responsibility to teach. If you can open your mind for long enough to do it you might surprise yourself at how many lessons life has to share. The parent prematurely ending the situation by force or coercion is not logical and is bereft of any lessons at all.

"If you allow your child to feel small amounts of the unpleasantness that bad behavior will create for them, you not only teach them skills NOW, you prepare them for the real world where their mommy is no longer there to protect them. "

Sometimes it does take real examples to learn, sometimes it doesn't. Hey I always knew climbing the tree was potentially dangerous, I knew falling out would hurt...I didn't need to fall out and get hurt to know that and had my parents pushed me out of the tree I would no doubt have a shattered relationship with them! Would I thank them for the broken bones, for the lesson I *had* to learn? I don't think you need to abuse your children physically or emotionally to teach them about how harsh real life can be.

"I am not just speaking out of my hat."

Yes you are, but we all are so I guess that's OK. It's called anecdotal evidence and it's what people will use to try and convince you that you are wrong and they are right. By the way - I think you are wrong if you hadn't guessed (;

"I am a parent, but I have also interviewed, hired and fired dozens of young people over the past two decades, many of whom apparently came from homes with the parenting style advocated here. "

Um, I dare say they were not. TCS children are more often than not very high achievers, you wouldn't be firing them....but I can bet if you'd really met them as youths and adults you'd want them working FOR you!! You've jumped to the incorrect conclusion based on what?

"they are unable to discipline themselves to do things they don't want to do, can not handle criticism, and run away from unpleasant situations rather than facing them directly. "

Oh dear they are definitely not TCS kids you fired!!! You really have no idea what TCS is do you - or the type of people and characteristics it fosters? I'd suggest you need to do some further research before you perpetuate even more ignorance.

"The real world is a harsh, cold unforgiving place, and sending your kids out into it without an understanding of the behavior and self-discipline required to survive in it is no less than child abuse. "

How do you teach self-discipline? By dictating? Isn't that the polar opposite? Think about it. You teach self-discipline by giving information and allowing the self to dictate. TCS arms kids with more information, a greater understanding of behaviour and they have the ability to be completely self-determining - they survive and thrive.

"Children ARE different from adults and need to be treated as such. This is not being disrespectful of the child as an individual - failing to see and meet the unique needs of a child is the ultimate disrespect. "

You seem to have TCS confused with permissiveness - which is indeed neglectful and abusive.

"It is your job as a parent to teach."

Not many would argue this...?! I think TCS parents "teach" a hell of a lot MORE than your average parent....Waaaaaaay more in fact. It takes more time and more effort but it is very much worth it.

" If you tell an adult not to touch the hot stove because he will get burned, the adult's reasoning processes are fully developed enough that he will decide not to touch it. But anyone who has been around children knows you can TELL a child about the consequences of touching that stove until you are blue in the face, but eventually he will have to touch it to learn the lesson."

Some children will get the message, especially if they trust you are telling them the truth. Some children may not. If they don't it is either that they are not yet ready for that lesson and/or it is YOUR failing, you did not equip them with the necessary information to stop them getting hurt. This is not the child's fault - if you knew they would get hurt and you could have stopped it (or ideally helped them stop themselves) then it is you who are the abuser!

" I have intentionally allowed my kids to touch the front of the stove door after warning them - the door is hot enough to cause pain, but not to inflict permanent damage."

Yikes! And you state TCS = child abuse???? You are the abuser - that is disgusting.

" I don't enjoy seeing my kids suffer even that small amount of pain, but by BEING A GROWNUP and doing something I find difficult, I am minimizing the chance that my child will end up in the emergency room with serious burns because he didn't really understand the consequences of his actions. "

No you are just cruel. There are so many ways to teach children, letting them come to harm IS NOT ONE OF THEM! I don't understand how you think you can justify yourself....you can try but the fact is you are neglectful....and as you have said yourself that is tantamount to abuse.

"If our society were some Utopian place where everyone was nice to everyone else and rules for proper behavior did not exist, this parenting method MIGHT be appropriate."

Firstly TCS is not a parenting "method", describing something as a method implies that it is a formula, one size fits all prescription. Life is not one size fits all, everyone is different and should be treated as individuals. TCS IS appropriate. For me it is a mindset that took a long time to develop. It is for all those reasons that this philosophy IS appropriate - look how screwed up the world is - isn't it about time people looked at things a little differently?!?!

" However, this is not what our society is like, and by failing to do the hard parts of your job as a parent, you are failing both your child and our society. "

TCS is hardly the easy way out...in fact it is far from it. It takes far more effort and far more thought than your "average" parent is used to. TCS is hard work, if you are scared of hard work then it won't be for you. If you think you are preparing your kids for the world by being cruel and dictatorial then there's little hope for you, just keep taking the easy road.....and we'll see who ends up the good citizens and the model society. You see - I KNOW I am doing the right thing, it feels right, instinctively and morally. I see my brilliant thriving children and I know I made a lot of the right choices....and I plan on keeping on down the same road my parents started down all those years ago....

[to post comments](#)

Huh?

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 29 May, 2004 - 04:18

I find it completely disturbing that Mum wouldn't be mentioning to Billy that his actions affect other people (ie someone will have to clean up his mess - a consequence the waiter is probably familiar with). And don't even think about saying that the waiter is getting paid to clean up after Billy! The waiter is there to clean up plates and whatever food reasonably falls from the forks and spoons of the novice diner. If Mum reassured the waiter that she and/or Billy would clean up the mess instead of him maybe he would lighten up on his attitude, but just because you can afford to be a jerk is not a good reason to be one.

[to post comments](#)

Hmm...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 1 June, 2004 - 06:48

I am new to this site and I have a question and a comment. I would have to say that I agree with the reader on this aspect:

"But anyone who has been around children knows you can TELL a child about the consequences of touching that stove until you are blue in the face, but eventually he will have to touch it to learn the lesson."

I have a son who is VERY stubborn in his ways. He is six years old and he thinks he knows everything there is to know. I have sat down with him time and time again and we have discussed what can happen when he goes outside on the deck without his shoes on. However, he looks at you and says, "I won't get splinters! I'm six years old. I can take care of myself and I know what I'm doing." So, with him having the knowledge that he can get splinters in his feet without his shoes and having this explained to him VERY WELL he goes out there anyway (when I run to the bathroom or turn away to discuss something with my daughter about the consequences of pulling on the kitty's tail) without his shoes on and gets a splinter.

Is this to say that I am a bad parent because I allowed this to happen? Would it not then be coercion if I INSISTED that he put his shoes on before he goes outside on the deck to play?

He was explained the situation and he had the knowledge of what could happen. Is it not then a natural consequence for him to decide on his own to go out and get a splinter?

I suppose I am still confused on the workings of TCS and am interested to hear others views.

[to post comments](#)

What about the Waiter's feelings?

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 6 June, 2004 - 23:32

Telling Billy-oh, who cares about the waiter, let's make fun of him!

What kind of example is that? That other people don't matter? That the child is better than everyone else?

Nice attitude there!

-Victoria Duncan

[to post comments](#)

Why not a Combination

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 15 June, 2004 - 12:41

Seems to me that Billy should not be shielded from the consequences of his actions, if he is unable or unlikely to conclude what those consequences are then perhaps Mum should explain them to him and let him decide if the amusement provided by building sugar lump castles is sufficient to warrant the consequences.

Saying that, one of the consequences explained to Billy might be that other peoples reactions to him building the sugar lump castles will make Mum feel uncomfortable and wish to leave, taking Billy with her, unlikely to return

to the restaurant (or at least unlikely to return with Billy) for some time.

I don't know if that would be considered an artificial punishment by the TCS's but it seems like a logical and natural consequence to me.

[to post comments](#)

This story

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 2 July, 2004 - 17:32

is the biggest load of crap I have ever seen. If a kid wants to go to a specific restaurant and he knows what the behavioral expectations of the establishment are and he's not willing to abide by them, then he's out of there. Taking him to another restaurant and pointing out to him how much fun that is sure does teach him that disrespecting other people's feelings is just fine (as does sniggering at the waiter, which is certainly a *fine* example of how I wish my kids to behave!).

[to post comments](#)

And another thing ...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 2 July, 2004 - 18:04

What happens when you are at a friend's house and Billy is playing with her sugar cubes and she doesn't want him to? Are you going to snigger at your friend and tell Billy she's unreasonable? Are you just going to take him to another friend's house and assure him he'll have more fun there because this friend isn't so uptight?

And as for what's wrong with playing with the sugar cubes, I can think of several things: once Billy gets his hands all over them, they can't be left out for other customers, so they are being wasted and also, the waiter will have to clean up any mess Billy makes (unless, of course, Billy cleans it up himself, but if he's so uncaring about other people's feelings that he will continue to do something he knows someone else doesn't want him to do, I doubt he's the type to clean up his messes).

[to post comments](#)

A reader wrote that children

Submitted by katherand on 31 July, 2004 - 15:21

A reader wrote that children should be seen and not heard, and kept from making pests of themselves. I am assuming that this is because certain people do not wish to see or hear or interact with children, and find the entire process annoying or distasteful. And yes, this is true. Some people dislike children. As well, many people do not want to see or hear or interact with: the elderly, persons with 'handicaps', overweight people, ugly people, poor people, people of a specific race, and a whole bunch of others. So would it be fair to say that these people have a responsibility to keep themselves out of sight, or at the very least be seen and not heard, so as to not annoy anybody?

I have wondered that if brought up with the idea that children are to be seen and not heard (or neither seen nor heard! worser & worser), the feeling doesn't go away in adulthood. If it's true of (disabled) children then under what circumstances is it any different for (disabled) adults?

Katherand

to post comments

for reader "and another thing..."

Submitted by canyonstar on 2 August, 2004 - 14:05

reference article on this very same website: "waste not, want not"

:) those sugar cubes are a conjecture. playing is learning is not "waste". offer to pay for x amount of sugar cubes, have it added on the bill, please. :)

if other diners are uncomfortable viewing a child having a good time building something with the inspiration of the items on the table before hir, maybe they would benefit from reading these blogicles. :D

to post comments

This subject upsets me terribly!

Submitted by Serious on 5 March, 2005 - 18:13

Erin, I agree wholeheartedly with your reasonable discussion and you see, I am the mother of a touretter and quite possibly have tics myself (different degrees). I have lived with and still debate with a person who believes children should be seen and not heard and when there are only three in a relationship...who gets left out? My child. What happens when I want to spend time with my child? Pandemonium! I have been in the middle of my child and partner for too long now, and since we're all suffering, I'll have to be the one who ends it. The stress is unbearable and for another person to call this kind of behaviour we're all talking about here, "tough love"...well that's OUT-DATED...it didn't work then and it won't work now. I am the abused...I won't be repeating history. My child deserves the same as any adult as far as respect, understanding, kindness, hope, faith, warmth, and everything else that is positive. Again, I agree with your sentiments. Peace!

to post comments

It's never too late...

Submitted by Serious on 5 March, 2005 - 18:27

I'm in this situation right now. I have a partner who has opposite parenting styles to my own, who has raised her kids with an authoritarian attitude and now has little to no relations with them. She dislikes this about herself, takes it out on my son using the blame game and I can't get her to realise that it's never too late. Don't lose

hope...share...care...life's too short! I have to tell my partner to go because her method is damaging my child and myself. The destruction must end. Peace!

[to post comments](#)

Guess what...

Submitted by Serious on 5 March, 2005 - 18:59

I was raised to 'be seen and not heard' and guess where I am today? SEEN AND NOT HEARD! I'm 45 with a disability. Now, I wouldn't allow my son to play with sugar cubes in a restaurant, and I was faced with it like many others. I simply explained every conceivable idea I could think of to 'help my child' UNDERSTAND, and today he understands why he shouldn't.

But suppose a child has some mannerisms like what is called Tourettes maybe he copies, mimics and echoes others accents and speech. Not a 'problem child' but a child with a genuine problem. He'll need a sense of humour, when he loses that...he's DEAD! Does anyone CARE? Is there any compassion in todays society that allows for afflictions? Or are our hearts so cold and selfish, we only care about what others think of us? Something to ponder...Peace!

[to post comments](#)

treating children as people

Submitted by Mambo (not verified) on 17 August, 2005 - 01:30

Isn't this whole site about all of that? I know, if I was sitting with a friend who'd been to a similar restaurant before and was doing something that was bothering me, I'd probably a) reasonably ask them to stop, if it was really disrupting my day that much, or b) get them interested in something else. Like, say, conversation. Assuming that the kid is old enough to form sentences.

If this article were really about treating children like people, we'd have to take into account that people tend to learn about other's emotions in these situations as well, rather than just learning what's "right" or "acceptable" in the restaurant. What do I want? What does the waiter want? What does Mommy want? Yes, I think even the mother's emotions and reactions should come into play, rather than pure "think it out" logic. Otherwise it's just sheilding them from what they feel is right and wrong, and the fact that everyone has different opinions on that same subject. Not everyone is in perfect synch with everyone else. Compromise, people, compromise.

*not liable for damages caused to sugar cubes, and/or sugar-nazi waiters.

[to post comments](#)

Inmates running the asylum

Submitted by a social worker (not verified) on 16 December, 2005 - 16:29

I totally agree with your comment!!! Sometimes social workers and society go too far with trying to keep peace with our children...

to post comments

They have it wrong

Submitted by Jens2Cents (not verified) on 22 March, 2006 - 05:00

I don't know any parent who uses natural consequences without so much as warning the child of the possible outcomes of his or her behavior. To assume that a parent is going to sit back and do no teaching is ridiculous. If I tell my child not to take his shoes off in the car (a child of say 3 years of age, use common sense, I'm not talking about a 10 month old here) because his feet will be cold when we walk into the house, and he takes them off, then the first time I will probably put them back on, but I will tell him that I expect him to keep his shoes on next time.

If he tells me, the next time we are out in the car "I'm going to take off my shoes" and I AGAIN (gosh there's that whole teaching them) tell him his feet will be cold when he walks inside the house, and that I will not be putting them back on for him, so please leave your shoes on, and he AGAIN takes them off, well, he's walking inside barefoot! Yeah, the walkway is a good 30 feet or so, and it's 40 degrees outside, but he will LEARN from this (no, not be punished, but actually learn). If he takes 5 steps and begs to be picked up because his feet are cold, of course he will be carried. Chances are, he will not take his shoes off again, because he has learned what it FEELS like to walk on the cold ground. If he does, even after being forewarned that he will have to walk inside (without being carried!) then he has CHOSEN to accept this consequence. A natural consequence obviously is not a safe choice everytime. When it is a safe choice, then let them have at it. If, for example, the walkway was 100 feet, and it was 5 degrees outside with ice all over the ground, then a little modification is necessary (maybe have him touch his toes to the ground and say "see, too cold for barefeet, let's leave our shoes on while we are out from now on.") Yeah, it requires a little THOUGHT and some common sense but it does work.

As for letting the kid run into the street or drink bleach - DUH!!! No discipline should be a blanket policy type of thing. If a natural consequence is going to mean that HARM will come to your child, don't do it. If it means they will be emotionally scarred or absolutely terrified, then by all means, protect them from it until they are able to LEARN (gee there's that whole learning thing again) about the consequence in a safer way.

What the post also failed to mention, is that if this parent is telling the child the possible outcomes of his sugar cube behavior (stupid example really) then the kid looks at mom and says "NO! I want to play! Stop talking!" WHAT THEN? HUH? If you are kicked out of the restaurant, is that not a natural consequence? How will you protect your little angel from THAT? Demand that because you are "taking him seriously" that he MUST not be told to leave?

Sounds like absolute spoiling to me, and it's HARD to spoil a child, but this just might be the way.

to post comments

Huh?

Submitted by Jens2Cents (not verified) on 22 March, 2006 - 05:06

Why are they ignorant? Do you really think a parent is going to just let a consequence happen without first trying to talk some sense into the kid? "If you do that, then X will happen or maybe even Y, so please don't do Z." No parent I know just sits there with their mouth shut and let's something happen without first trying to TEACH their child of the possible outcomes of his or her actions.

to post comments

ok..

Submitted by Jens2Cents (not verified) on 22 March, 2006 - 05:11

Billy smacked his brother because his brother wouldn't give him a turn with the toy truck. Now what?

"Oh honey, we don't hit, use your words."

What do you do if the kid smacks his brother again after that?

to post comments

Answer me this then...

Submitted by Jens2Cents (not verified) on 22 March, 2006 - 05:28

If what you say is true, that if it's possible to prevent a consequence and you don't, you're a negligent or cruel parent, then what would YOU do in this situation?

You've bought your child, a 3 year old, a new flap book (his favorite!) and because you are short on money, he has a limited collection of books, so you are happy that you were able to buy him another one, that he chose. He gets the book home, and begins to tear off the flaps. You intervene, telling him that will ruin his book, and it will not be as much fun reading it, etc, yet he does not listen and continues to tear off the flaps.

If you are a TCS parent you might...

Sit there and beg him to stop? Try to take the book from him? Buy him the same book again tomorrow leaving yourself without enough money for the week?

If you are a parent who uses natural consequences you might...

Walk away after telling him that the book cannot be replaced. This is his book, you've already told him of the consequence. When he asks to read the book later, you do the best you can, but he has no flaps to lift because he destroyed them. Had he stopped after your first intervention, you would have taped on the 1 or 2 flaps he had torn, but because he did not, you choose to let him fully understand the outcome of his actions, hoping that he will not do this with the next book you purchase for him, because he will not want a book with no flaps.

Honestly, tell me how you would handle this situation, and if you are a parent who practices TCS. Feel free to email. Jennifer143snl at AOL.com

natural consequences and logical consequences work

Submitted by jane (not verified) on 12 June, 2006 - 07:01

I don't know what "natural consequences" book this lady has been reading to write such a blind article on but she is quite wrong. First of all there are only so many options you have to teaching a child how to behave. Continuous or harsh punishment is going to hurt a child either physically or mentally, make him resentful and/or rebellious, and make the parent seem like a steal fisted ruler with no care about the child's feelings. So, deciding to avoid all that you have cut your options back.

Now in ALL of the consequence reading I have done I have never once read anything like what this lady spews. Every book I have read begins with the steps of explaining to the child what is expected of him, and WHY it is expected. The second part comes with a warning or reminder to explain to the child what will happen as a consequence for his behavior and lastly let the consequence happen if he refuses to listen.

Example: a child hates putting on his winter coat, it was puffy and heavy and he didn't like it. The parent tries to put it on him and when he refuses says nicely "are you sure you don't want to wear it? it is very cold outside". Child refuses, so, instead of fighting and arguing and making everyone upset and making the child hate the act of putting on his winter coat even MORE, parent simply says "ok" and parent just carries it. When child gets cold, he very happily puts it on. No tears, no yelling and, even though the parent had offered the reason why, he truly LEARNED why we wear our coats.

The next part of natural consequences follows when you cannot allow a natural consequence to occur (such as running into the street) in which case they are punishments but they are a punishment that is directly related to the problem. why would you take away a child's favorite toy for 2 days when he wouldn't brush his teeth when you can just take away any sweet foods. saying "I'm sorry I can't let you eat this yogurt because I don't want you to get cavities" works better and gets the child thinking about the decision he had made and what might happen to him if he had been allowed to carry it out. It also helps him see that you love him and are not letting the "crap fall where it will" protecting a child too much from life will only serve to raise a spoiled child who expects others to do things and handle situations for them. you do not clean a child's mess up for him just so he can go to a movie, if he wants to go to a movie you remind him he is not going until it's clean, you tell him he has 2 hours before it starts,..and one hour, and then if it's not clean, you follow through and he doesn't go. children learn to be responsible by making decisions and accepting the consequences that come with them.

you cannot just tell a child $5+5=10$ you have to teach them WHY it equals 10. and consequences teach a child WHY we ask or say or do what we do. Any child can memorize that mom doesn't like something, but what happens when he's not at home and mom's not around to rescue him? mom won't be around forever and children have to learn to take responsibility for themselves and make positive decisions for themselves. A child doesn't learn that by fending for himself or by being forced into doing this just "because I said so" or by having someone do everything for him but by gentle guidance and being given the chance to explore, with help from the parent and being allowed to see how the world works.

also I'd like to add, a parent's job is also to teach a child proper behavior in public and how to be respectful and even though it was just an example on the ladies part it is VERY rude even at somewhere as cheap and "kid friendly" as McDonald's to let a child dump a pile of salt on the table. Not only is it a waste of salt, but it is very rude to make such a mess when someone else has to clean it up. But I guess that's what happens when you are a parent who thinks it's better to do everything for your child instead of letting them learn responsibility, she just probably expects people to do things like that for her.

to post comments

in response to some others

Submitted by jane (not verified) on 12 June, 2006 - 07:27

as to the "what do you do if the kid smacks his brother again?"

In consequence parenting it would seem logical to me at least that if he can not play nice with a toy, and share a toy, ask nicely for a toy etc that he doesn't get to play with the toy and must be removed away from his brother until he can be nice to his brother (with an explanation why and how he should act)

If I had a child who was like this with his friends, getting upset when he wanted a toy and hitting, I would explain how he hurt the other child, make him apologize and ask nicely,..and make the other child share the toy. If however he did it more than once or would not apologize then I would take him to his room and tell him "if you cannot be nice to your friends you cannot be around your friends" in this case the natural consequence of being mean to a friend would more likely have been the friend would have left and not played with my child anymore. Not only would that have made the friend feel sad that he had to leave and stop playing, but my child would have gotten his toy back like he wanted and realized that if he didn't want someone around all he has to do is hit them..not really a good natural consequence so I would use a logical consequence instead. The rest of us could all sit down together and play while my child sat in his room. Then he could realize he was missing out on the fun by being mean so when he had calmed down, he could decide that apologizing and playing together nicely and sharing was a better idea. it just takes a little common sense to decide what is best and let your child actually learn if he won't listen.

you can lead a horse to the water but you can't make him drink...but sure enough after a while if he's thirsty enough he'll drink by himself.

to post comments

Here, Here Jens2cents! I

Submitted by Amanda_B (not verified) on 23 August, 2006 - 14:41

Here, Here Jens2cents! I agree completely. What nutterball parent would let natural consequences actually damage their child? Abuse is neglect (TCS) and willful injury (Natural consequences) so I guess if you boil it all down to basics it's better to "spare the rod and spoil the child". Now let's get back to reality, there is NO absolute right or wrong way to parent with these theories (hey theories are for trying, right) it is with a combination of many that we succeed. Sometimes a "good natured lecture (TCS way)" works and when it does not "natural consequences" do. I am curious as to how TCS deals with problem children? Or are they only problem children because it's the parents fault? How about AD/HD or ODD children, try explaining things to them while they are acting out. Good Luck. I try to treat my AD/HD child with the utmost respect and for the most part it works but it has also made him rely on others to make up his mind for him. For my son natural consequences, what would happen in the real world, is the only way he actually listens. It is not used to cause pain or injury that is most definitely abusive. It does however demonstrate that, when shoes are left about the house and you have been told to pick them up so they don't get "lost" and that continuing to leave them out will result in "losing" them, you must have consequences as a result of your decisions, you wear other shoes that are available. It is called cause and effect

people and it is hands on training, teaching, or upbringing however you call it. Every child has a different learning method. This applies here, some learn by watching, others by listening, others still by acting or receiving actions.

to post comments

original article confused me

Submitted by C-Mo (not verified) (<http://donthaveone.com>) on 29 November, 2006 - 13:33

I had to read the original article a few times before I understood it.

It talks about how people pretend they are using natural consequences. They are really making up punishments for their kids. One example of this is; Mom could easily drive her child to school, but refuses to do it because the child woke up late, and Mom wants to "teach the child a lesson."

Some people do not properly instruct their children in what the consequences of their actions will be. The children get a nasty surprise while the parent stands back and doesn't help. An example of this is watching your child burn his hand on the stove, without ever warning him, or trying to explain why he shouldn't touch the stove.

The original article describes how to use natural consequences. It says not to let the consequence be a nasty surprise. Explain to the child what might happen. Mom explains to Billy that the waiter does not like him playing with sugar. The waiter could say something about it..

It says Mom can whisper to jokes to Billy about what an idiot the waiter is. The first time I read this, I thought it meant that TCS parents think anyone who disapproves of their children's actions is a jerk. Perhaps other people thought the same way. Maybe that is why people commented things like, "This will spoil a child. Children need to learn to behave."

Now I see that this was only intended to be used when the waiter was unreasonable. Imagine Billy is stirring two teaspoons of sugar in a little dish. He is not making a mess or wasting lots of food. The waiter says something harsh and nasty. The waiter IS unfair.

I am out in public with my children a lot. Most people are nice. Every-once-in-a-while, we run across a grump. I don't call the person names, or make jokes about them. I don't think that is the best way to handle it.

Imagine Billy is standing on a chair, dumping out mounds of salt, pepper and sugar. Sugar is even on the floor and flying onto other people's tables. The waiter looks unhappy. I think Mom could ask Billy to stop. She should explain why she asked him to stop and ask him to help clean the mess. Maybe Mom now thinks that coming to this restaurant was not the best thing to do. Maybe Billy needs to be allowed lots of daily exercise. Billy just came from a long church service where he had to sit quietly. This restaurant requires him to sit quietly too. Billy is "climbing the walls." Mom can just be honest and explain this to Billy and the waiter. Mom can suggest they go home for lunch. Billy can play outside in his sandbox, later, if he wants. I don't think that is a natural consequence, but I think it is reasonable thing to do.

to post comments

don't understand this type of parenting

Let's say you have a child who is constantly getting in the fridge because they say they're hungry, by constantly I mean every 60-90 minutes, even right after a meal. You feed them plenty because they are in their weight range but you don't want to watch them become overweight and unhealthy because of all the problems they will have throughout their life.

It seems to me that what this type of disciplining is doing is saying just tell your child they are not suppose to eat so much because they could become overweight and it is unhealthy. If they constantly eat and then become overweight and unhealthy then they are learning the consequences naturally. I feel that is an uncaring parent who does not try everything they can to teach their child not to eat so much, not explain things that are not understandable to children.

I believe this type of disciplining is just like every other type, sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. I fully believe that older children could probably thrive with a natural discipline like this one, no one discipline is fully right for everyone. I don't believe small children can understand enough to learn from this type of discipline all the time. Children are not adults and should not be expected to think like them.

to post comments

natural consequences is largely neglect

Submitted by momtimesfive (not verified) on 19 April, 2007 - 21:42

My sister and her husband use natural consequences to parent her two children. They are ages 6 and 11, they are my nephews and I love them. I am sad for them, however, since she has never taught them table manners, how to ask for things politely, or to apologize when they offend someone. These simple social basics she takes for granted (she was raised properly) are lacking in her two boys and I believe they going to suffer because of it. She has also been "less than attentive" in her supervision of them around the house and neighborhood. She has left them alone and let them do dangerous things, even at young ages when they can't know better, always saying things like "they'll just learn they can't do that." To me, this is insanity and near child neglect. I am astonished when they visit and have dinner with me. Her kids will grow up and never get invited to a person's house twice because they slouch on the table, chew with their mouths wide open, help themselves to whatever is in the fridge and cabinets, and never say please or thank you. She was brought up right and I can't help thinking it's unfair for "natural consequence" people to be using their own children as guinea pigs with this largely untested approach.

I am already staring to see her children are going to have a heck of a time! :(It breaks my heart because they are nice little boys. But you know when children say and do things that really aggravate you, just by lacking the most basic social manners, and all you can say is "It's not their fault, it's the parents fault for NOT TEACHING THEM." Why would parents who care PURPOSELY not teach their children proper behavior? I think they are doing their children a huge disservice! The mantra is "They'll learn" OH YEAH, WHEN? When they are disliked or ignored or joked about or teased? When they have no friends and wonder what is wrong with them. When some kids finally says: You smell! A girl they like says "you eat like a pig!" It's sad but true.

Let me ask: what do you do to a three year old who won't stay away from the pool? Let her fall in and nearly drown again and again and again? What about climbing up near the hot stove. Oh, she'll learn when she has 3rd degree burns on 1/2 her face? Of course not! they need to learn of the other consequences (spanking, etc) for their own good and safety. Well, the same principles apply for EVERYTHING you need teach your kids, whether physically dangerous or otherwise!

And, I ask you, what small consolation will it be to "natural consequence" parents that their sweet children are now the class rejects because they were never taught to put their dirty laundry in the hamper, wipe or wash themselves clean or finally learn the manners and social skills their parents "guessed" they would pick up somewhere along the way. My 11 YO nephew has smelled for years every year I see him and it really breaks my heart. I shudder to think what will happen to his self esteem when he hits puberty.

There will be no consolation and I believe it is largely a social experiment with children being the victims. It is a travesty and failure of adults to expect children to "learn everything on their own" They cannot do that and unless you were raised successfully in that same manner, do not attempt this experiment on your child. It is well meant and these parents love their children, but it is not going to work.

Old fashioned discipline with lots of love, encouragement, some age-appropriate free rein to make mistakes, and punishments for deliberate testing and defiance is the recipe I believe to be the best.

Peace to all who read; you wouldn't be reading these messages if you didn't care about your children.

to post comments

natural consequences

Submitted by [serena rainey \(not verified\)](http://www.serenarainey.blogspot.com) (<http://www.serenarainey.blogspot.com>) on 10 September, 2007 - 22:10

I believe adults and children are all people, but adults are senior people and children are junior people who haven't mastered the basics as much as adults. If our kids know as much about how to live as we do, it is natural that they leave and make their own homes. They are supposed to want that, very deeply. For that reason, I don't see adults and their living-at-home offspring as equals. In the restaurant, first, I would think we'd only be there if a) little Junior was normally as good at eating politely as the restaurant called for, or b) we had no other place we could eat at that time for some real reason, e.g. snowed in while getting the car fueled next to the place, no one leaving the strip mall for the night, no other source of food in the mall. Something that serious. In case a), I would tell Junior on the way in what kind of place it is and let him know I like nice restaurants and want him to respect that. I am buying. I expect decent company at my table. In case b), I would let him be himself. If he harms or takes anything from others, I would restrain him just as I would restrain a drunk adult friend who was doing the same, until we could go home. So to me, natural consequences are those that really naturally follow from a desire to respect everyone's needs and rights, not manipulative strategies that put the child or the adult at the center of the world.

to post comments

The double standard

Submitted by Grant (not verified) on 30 January, 2008 - 13:26

People frown on kids doing almost anything in restaurants other than sitting like statues. I was in a restaurant last w/e, and the screeching and hollering and banging of spoons on the table hurt my ears and must have been more than a little disturbing to all the diners around those at the offending table.

Of course, as those at the offending table were adults, no one complained.

Kids wouldn't have gotten away with even a fraction of the noise they made. The double standard is so unfair.

Grant

[to post comments](#)

What's the hurry?

Submitted by LL (not verified) on 13 February, 2009 - 03:10

I think a key concept in the example of Billy playing with the salt and sugar is to understand that the parent may consider it to be ok that Billy is doing something undesirable at this moment in time. That behavior is not permanent. Billy is a work in progress. He is doing some behaviours NOW that he will not likely be doing in a few more years.

Learning is a process. It is NOT a single point in time, before which the parent hasn't parented hard enough, and after which the parent has crammed in enough lessons.

So, it is ok to lose a battle now in order to win the war. The battle in this story being the wish to have a child behaving in a way that is considerate of others NOW, and the war being that the child will become an adult who is comfortable managing his own self without someone standing over him with a stick.

In some situations, the battle must not be lost, at any cost. If the child dies by drinking bleach or being hit by a car, he will never grow up to be that excellent adult.

Parenting involves a lot of balancing of short-term and long-term strategy. Each child and each parent is different, and the ideal strategy in each case will be a different balance of short- and long-term choices.

It appears to me that what the article is intending to do is persuade us that one viable option is to sacrifice the short-term desired behavior in favor of a long-term goal. Most people fear losing any ground at all, ever. It may make a huge difference simply to expose a parent to the idea that it is ok to let undesirable behavior proceed sometimes as a strategy that contributes to a greater goal. That unties the parent's hands, allowing him to find some solutions that were previously assumed to be off-limits.

So, in that regard I agree with the article. A child at 5 or 10 or 15 is definitely far from being complete. Now is the time for them to choose choices that we wish they wouldn't choose and see what really happens, while we are standing by to protect them as best we can from the horrors of losing the battles no one can afford to lose. The long-term benefit of freely operating in reality and discovering how that reality responds to him will NOT outweigh the risk of harm from letting him do dangerous things, but could certainly outweigh any momentary discomfort caused by the child's inconsiderate behavior.

[to post comments](#)

"natural consequences"

Submitted by Montessorian Deb on 11 March, 2009 - 07:52

I highly recommend reading Rudolph Dreikur's book, "Children, The Challenge" if you want to really understand all this stuff about natural consequences, positive discipline, and more. The book is easy to read and understand, it really works, and he is the original source.

You are all mistaken in what you think a natural consequence is (and this could possibly be because the source for your information is unclear or just plainly incorrect).

There are natural consequences (related to "nature") and logical consequences (related to society/culture/"rules"). Neither should be harmful to a child, either physically or emotionally, and neither precludes being a good parent whose role is to guide a child through life with a kind demeanor and firm resolve.

For example, a natural consequence to a child choosing not to wear his coat outside is that he might get cold. (And, if not pestered with "I told you so" words or looks from adults, most children in this situation will choose to go back and put on their coat.) As IN ALL SITUATIONS RELATING TO A CHILD'S SAFETY OR HEALTH, the adult must always consider the possible consequences carefully.

In the case above, the adult would NOT allow the child to choose to go coatless in DANGEROUSLY cold weather. When SAFETY or HEALTH is at stake, a rule or guideline is established and followed consistently (and the child knows and understands the rule or guideline ahead of time) - a natural consequence would not be allowed to occur if it would cause harm. In the case of the coat, the guideline could be a certain temperature on the thermometer (combined with wind chill/rain/snow elements and a reasonable adult assessment). If a child refused to wear a coat when it was DANGEROUSLY cold, then the LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE would be that the child would have to stay inside. Calmly and matter-of-factly, the adult accepts the child's choice and MOVES ON.

The above example is an opportunity to show respect for a child's choices, and an opportunity to show respect for one's health and safety (by having reasonable and firm guidelines about situations concerning health and safety).

Does all that make sense? Dreikur's book is well-worth buying because it can be read again and again and is a nice source for those "what do I do in THIS situation?" moments that we parents encounter daily.

Happy parenting!!

to post comments

Link in a chain

Submitted by [Sakura Blossom \(not verified\)](http://yahoo.com/directory) on 15 May, 2009 - 00:31

It's my belief that kids need to learn that the world doesn't revolve around them, but they are still a part of it. Billy should be brought to the attention that the waiter is uncomfortable with what he is doing-ask him how he felt the last time someone was annoying him-But he should also understand that he doesn't have to be bored out of his mind for an hour or two just to keep the waiter happy. If he still doesn't get it, try relating it to an experience he had (it's easier to understand something from your own familiar point of view). If he STILL doesn't understand, it's not the end of the world, he's still young and learning. Just make another lesson out of it and have him clean up his salt/sugar kingdom. He didn't grasp upscale social interaction on the first try, but yay, he's learning to clean up his own messes. Just be consistent, and maybe he'll get it next time. And the waiter was probably just thinking "Great, now i'll have to clean all this salt off of everything" anyway. Now he doesn't, mom avoided confrontation, and Billy learned a lesson. It's all good. *just my opinion-i'm just a 12-yr-old, so what do i know about parenting, right?*

I think its too bad that the

Submitted by Connie C. Sequences (not verified) on 30 June, 2009 - 16:56

I think its too bad that the four authorities on "natural consequences" cited by the author of the original article, Sarah Fitz-Claridge, were (apparently) such crap. She goes on to ballyhoo TCS as apparently explaining various things that might happen to Billy.

First, let's think about what a natural consequence really is, and then return to Ms Fitz-Claridge's ideas about TCS. What we will find is that (A) they are not too terribly different and (B) Ms Fitz-Claridge is essentially doing natural consequences despite her bashing of natural consequences.

1. Nearly everything a person does is a choice. 2. For every choice, there are Natural Consequences. 3. All natural consequences are natural, i.e., they happen automatically. 4. For any given choice, all - repeat ALL - of the natural consequences happen automatically whether or not anyone is aware of them. 5. If some so-called consequence requires implementation by somebody else, then that is not a NATURAL consequence but a choice on the part of somebody else in reaction to the first person's choices.

TCS, apparently, involves explaining what choices other people might make in response to some behavior. Well, ok.... I have no problem with that. It sounds great. But why not also explain the factors that might matter to those other people when they make their choices? For example, perhaps the waiter sees Billy playing with the sugar cubes and is (legitimately) concerned about the public health aspect of the next person putting those cubes in their mouth? Putting microbes from Billy's hands on the sugar cubes is a NATURAL CONSEQUENCE of his playing with the cubes. The waiter, in turn, might insist Billy stop doing that and if the waiter believes he has a public duty to protect the public health the waiter might ultimately tell the family to beat it. (in which case, I'd ask the waiter why they leave the cubes on the table at all, but hey, I'm a pragmatist)

My point is that TCS sounds great, explain to Billy what choices others might make. That's great!! But how about also explaining to Billy that other people's reactionary choices will be in reaction to the natural consequences of Billy's choices?

In sum, TCS and *real* natural consequences are not all that opposed to each other. TCS is about explaining reactionary choices by <<<<<< OTHERS >>>>>>. Knowledgeable natural consequences is about explaining, the natural (instantaneous- inherent-automatic-unavoidable) consequences of our OWN.

One more example.

Ground a kid who doesn't do their homework is parents choice.

Explaining to the kid that parent might implement such a choice is TCS.

Explaining to the kid that if they don't do their homework they get more time to do (whatever), and they don't use up lead in the pencil, and they don't know the material that their classmates are learning so might get left behind, and they irritate or worry their parents, and the list of automatic inherent natural consequences goes on. Whatever the parent does in response is the parent's choice. Explaining those possibilities, if I understand correctly, is TCS.

So what I don't get is why all the fuss distinguishing the two?

to post comments

THIS IS BALONEY: "So where,

Submitted by Connie C. Sequences (not verified) on 30 June, 2009 - 17:00

THIS IS BALONEY:

"So where, in such situations, is there a real natural consequence – that is to say, an unpleasant consequence we might reasonably call “natural”? The answer is that if, given all Mum's efforts, the waiter were to ask them to leave the restaurant, that might reasonably be called a natural consequence."

THAT WOULD BE A *CHOICE* MADE BY THE WAITER. EVERYBODY CONFUSES CHOICES AND GENUINELY NATURAL (IE INHERENT) CONSEQUENCES.

to post comments

Logic

Submitted by Tamera Herriman (not verified) on 4 October, 2009 - 19:55

Speaking from both a parent and par-professional, in a headstart setting, point of view, I firmly believe that Natural consequences are the best in MOST situations, obviously if your child is running in the street or attempting to drink bleach (who does that?) natural consequence are not acceptable. Logical consequences must be put in to effect. If your child is running in the street and your expectations are clearly defined, a logical consequence may be...the child cannot go outside to play for awhile. If your child is attempting to drink or consume anything poisonous, the logical consequence falls on the parent to PUT THEM OUT OF REACH!!! I can't believe anyone would use that as an example.

T Herriman

to post comments

Confusing Natural and Logical Consequences

Submitted by [Kelly Pfeiffer \(not verified\)](http://www.thinkithroughparenting.com/) (http://www.thinkithroughparenting.com/) on 28 April, 2010 - 13:06

Having a child walk to school or miss breakfast is a LOGICAL consequence instead of a NATURAL consequence. I'm not sure where the information in the parenting books is coming from, but I teach these concepts to parents and there is a major difference in natural and logical consequences.

NATURAL consequences are "mother nature" and "father time". If a child doesn't tie their shoe, they will probably trip over their shoestrings. If a child doesn't wear their coat in 32F degree weather, they will most likely be cold. If a child goes a long time without eating, they will be hungry.

LOGICAL consequences are parent or adult imposed but that relate to the misbehavior in some way. Some parenting philosophies have guidelines about the consequences being related, reasonable and respectful. Of course

in my teaching parents, I have learned that different parents have different ideas about what is and isn't respectful to children.

In the curriculum I teach, I introduced natural consequences and logical consequences as tools available to them, but do not advocate them as the only tools. I introduce 40 plus other tools that use problem solving, setting age appropriate limits, offering choices and solutions, etc. I have found that parents trying to move from a punishment based system feel more comfortable stepping next to using natural and logical consequences before they are ready to move towards problem solving and solutions. Change takes time and parents feel more comfortable taking baby steps towards changing. I know that many TCS parent would not consider some of the problem solving and solution tools as options for them.

Anyway, wanted to comment on the difference between natural and logical consequences.

to post comments

Children are not possessive

Submitted by Jay (not verified) on 5 June, 2010 - 16:39

Children are not possessive of innate manners, proper behavior, or contextual insights into unwritten but observed rules of social interactions, nor how change of venue may alter these. Children are highly absorbent sponges who miss very little, sometimes to the chagrin of parents. :) Adults, on the other hand, have had years of implicit and explicit training in social graces and expected behavior. Rare are restaurants, museums, or other frequented public locations, (most of which require an admission fee, whether upon entrance, such as a concert, or a dine-in restaurant, where payment is exacted after a meal), which have clearly posted rules or standards of behavior.

It is a parent's responsibility to model and teach manners and expected behavior.

I agree with Erin. A children who's building the Eiffel Tower at the table with sugar cubes, as long as they're not being loud or making a mess, shouldn't be restrained simply because another patron finds it in poor taste. It's up to the discretion of parents whether this should be allowed. If it's such an offensive act, the party can leave or ask to be reseated.

I have two sons, 5 and almost 3. When they were 4 and nearly 2, I was having a late breakfast at Shari's Restaurant. It's a family restaurant similar to IHOP or Denny's. Except for at midnight, it's a rare occasion when no children are present. I was with my mother and wife and children, and they were being themselves. Perhaps a little louder occasionally than might be polite, but they weren't throwing things or making a mess or fighting. They were just enjoying a meal. An elderly couple two tables away complained loudly enough to each other that we should control our kids and shut them up so others can enjoy their food in peace and how they hate coming to restaurants when kids are there because they're so disrespectful and loud and should be made to sit up straight, etc. After a couple minutes of this embarrassing and rather infuriating litany, our waitress returned to top off coffee. The husband caught her attention and told her she needed to tell us to shut up because their hearing aids were turned up and it was hurting their eardrums. He then asked if we could be moved to a different part of the restaurant because we were bothering them. She told them we weren't being a problem and no one else had complained, and that she personally didn't see why we should be moved. She did offer to move them to another table, which they ended up doing, but it was clear from her tone and demeanor that she found the situation irritating and unreasonable. She later apologized for THEIR behavior, wondering aloud whether they'd forgotten what having kids in a public place was like sometimes. She received a nice tip. :)

As for adults who are disruptive, mitigating factors also need to be taken into account. It is expected that an adult will be able to exercise discretion and self-control, something children learn as they grow. Proper social etiquette dictates that while attending a movie, those in the theater remain silent, so that all may enjoy the movie. This is why cell-phones are requested to be turned off or to silent mode. Those who do converse should do so in low tones, such as in when asking someone to pass the popcorn or commenting quietly on what just occurred on-screen. This is reasonable. Someone who is loud or obnoxious may be warned by other patrons or perhaps an usher or other employee to remain quiet. If they do not comply, they may be asked to leave. A person with Tourette's must exert a tremendous amount of effort to begin to have a semblance of control over tics, even with medication. This isn't a blanket statement. Some have zero. Some have more. I'm replying in idiom, not necessarily in a medically accurate way. I do know several people with Tourette's Syndrome, and one has no control, a couple have some and one has an admirable amount. Each of them find it mentally and physically exhausting. Someone with involuntary tics or outbursts usually know they're disrupting situation and may excuse themselves or choose to remain where they are, neither without embarrassment. A person who is drunk or loud for other reasons may not know they're being a nuisance until someone tells them. A child who's exclaiming loudly in reaction to a movie or situation probably won't either. They just know that what happened was cool or exciting or scary or funny. Bottom line.....adults should control their behavior, children should be instructed on HOW to control their behavior.

to post comments

Too much worries...

Submitted by [Natalja Lekecin... \(not verified\)](http://natalleks.blogspot.com/2010/06/futuristic-parenting-style.html) (<http://natalleks.blogspot.com/2010/06/futuristic-parenting-style.html>) on 3 July, 2010 - 08:49

I like the idea of "natural consequence" in general, but maybe in this particular "Restaurant" situation I have a little bit different point of view.

1. I think the mother is worry too much about what will the waiter think or say. It would be better to help a child to play with sugar and to have a good time.
2. The problem would be if the waiter would tell something negative about it. How could we predict his thoughts if he is not telling anything, just looking angry. Maybe he has a problem in his personal life or something. And it is His problem if he doesn't like kids. The little Billy is not going to destroy the restaurant, I guess.
3. Yes, the child have to learn how to "behave" in some particular plaices. We can do a lot by modelling.
4. I think, I would take my child in the restaurant which is kids welcoming, not because of the angry waiter but because of my child. I don't want him to be bored.
5. But if the situation is like that, and we can do nothing about it, its better for everyone to have an extra little toy or activity book.

If kids are learning naturally they are able to make their own solutions in a future.

I think Natural Consequence go alongside with natural way of learning and self motivation.

to post comments

the bottom line

Submitted by kelly (not verified) on 23 July, 2010 - 20:33

i agree that there are natural and un natural consequences. Natural being "if you go outside in the rain,you will get wet". Un natural being "if you don't do your homework you can't watch tv". Natural ones are great because nature is always consistent,and does not lie. A parent should not be silent and just "let the crap fall on the kid". Sure,tell them "if you go out in the rain...." THEN step back and let them make the choice. I don't believe the mom should then try to save the child from the result of their choice unless it is too dangerous. BUT,what do you do if the child does not understand? What do you do when your child is just not rational? I have 5 children. No one can tell me that 2-5 year olds do not act irrational at times and just do not comprehend reality. The child flailing on the floor screaming for ice cream even though I have shown them the empty carton does happen.With an 18 month old that wants to play with a knife, you can supervise,but this is not the same as irrational. Now in the sugar cube scenario,i'm with the mom when she tells Billy how the waiter might feel. I think she should also honestly say how she feels about it. I do NOT think making fun of the waiter is ok at all! Why teach your child that their own needs count ,but not others?

In the cases described of hitting,I can tell you in real life you may never find out why Johnny hit Sammy. Maybe they don't want to tell you,maybe they don't even know themselves what led up to it.You can always guess,and it's good to try and get to the source if you can,but then what do you do when you cannot? They have a right to express anger, but the other person also has a right to feel safe. How do TCSers deal with this?What does a parent do when two siblings both believe it was the other sibs fault and they had the right? Bottom line is who is responsible? This also applies to the restaurant. Who is ultimately responsible? The child for his own behavior,the mother for the child? A kalahari bushman child would be allowed his own responsibility much more than a mom in the US. Here if my child smashed the neighbor's window,I,the parent,would be legally held responsible for payment.This in itself causes coercion because I am the one accountable,not the child.So,my question to TCSers..who is responsible?

to post comments

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