

Child rearing essay



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“ Corporal punishment is the use of physical force causing pain, but not wounds, as a means of discipline. ” Definition of Corporal Punishment by Unicef- Educate! Don’t Punish! Awareness Campaign Physical punishment was very common. In the past corporal punishment was by not only applied to children. It was used on adults as well. In England from the Middle Ages whipping was a common punishment for minor crimes. In the 18th century whipping or flogging was a common punishment in the British army and navy.

This type of punishment was abolished in England in 1881. Lambert P. 2) From the Middle Ages to the late 20th century children were disciplined with rods or rulers in schools, work and at home. (Lambert P. 2) After the Bible a lot of our modern philosophy on child rearing can be traced back to the writings of John Locke who wrote the treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* which was published in 1693. Locke started writing his thoughts about childrearing at the request of his cousin who was asking for advice about the upbringing of her son. (Cleverly et al P. 15)

As John Cleverly and D. C. Phillips point out in *Visions of Childhood: Influential Models From Locke to Spock*, Locke began by discounting the notion that any “ innate principles” arrived inborn with the infant. Instead, he proposed that a child entered the world as a *tabula rasa* or blank tablet upon which would be written the contents of the mind.

Locke wrote “...’tis fit we now come to consider the parts of the discipline to be us’d..... I have spoken so much of carrying a strict hand over children, that perhaps I shall be suspected of not considering enough, what is due to

their tender age and constitutions..... hat great severity of punishment does but very little good, nay, great harm in education; and I believe it will be found that, those children who have been most chastis'd, seldom make the best men. A compliance and suppleness of their wills, being by a steady hand introduc'd by parents, before children have memories to retain the beginnings of it, will seem natural to them, and work afterwards in them as if it were so, preventing all occasions of struggling or repining.

The only care is, that it be begun early, and inflexibly kept to 'till awe and respect be grown familiar, and there appears not the least reluctance in the submission, and ready obedience of their minds. When this reverence is once thus established, (which it must be early, or else it will cost pains and blows to recover it, and the more the longer it is deferr'd) 'tis by it, still mix'd with as much indulgence as they make not an ill use of, and not by beating, chiding, or other servile punishments, they are for the future to be govern'd as they grow up to more understanding. (Section 43-46 Modern History Soucebook)

Locke believed in maintaining a firm control of the child. He was not an advocate for overly admonishing or beating a child. Locke believed that corporal punishment and negative punishments would hinder a child's capacity to learn and be educated. He also believed that children's educational material should directly relate to their station in life. In other word's full education spectrum would be reserved for the higher class of gentlemen where as the poor would be served in learning a trade.

Jean – Jacques Rousseau who wrote Emile also was an advocate for positive reinforcement. He emphasized freedom. Rousseau is viewed as a romantic. Rousseau ' s belief in natural goodness was in direct opposition to the Puritan belief that people are born with “ Origin Sin”. He believed that “ evil is not a necessary part of our fallen condition but rather enters into the world as man moves from a state of nature to organized society. ”(Winnik P. 4) Rousseau prescribed permitting freedom to young children in addition to allowing children to follow their natural impulses.

Rousseau also coached parents to carefully supervise education, where the parent either educated or entrusted a knowledgeable teacher. Material was to be subjective and was to be carefully controlled. Today we see Rousseaus ideology in our culture in permissive parents and open classrooms. Classrooms where the students choose subject matter is closely related to Roussean educational philosophy.

John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist movement. Wesley concepts of childhood were deeply rooted in the Christian doctrine of original sin; children are born flawed and inherited the sins committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. James P. 98) Wesley was a proponent for corporal punishment. He was largely influenced by his mother Susanna Wesley who held set sleeping hours, family prayers, no food between meals, and using a rod for a corporal punishment for young children. (Cleverly P. 29)

Wesley looked down upon children having unsupervised time. He also did not allow play time or play days, every minute of the day was to be filled with purpose, whether by receiving religious instruction and prayer or by direct

education. Cleverly P. 30) “ Wesley’s conceptions of innate child behavior have been credited with partially shaping everything from the mid-twentieth-century fiction classic *Lord of the Flies* to rigid British schooling systems designed, it was believed, to remedy the deplorable nature of the untutored boy. ”(Winnik P. 6) Wesley’s principles regarding child rearing can be seen in those who advocates for guided spanking , strict punishment for disobedience , and “ tough love” parenting.

Some may liken this ideology to parents who “ control” their children with the use of drugs such as Ritalin or some equal drug. Children who are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder may seem at times willful and uncontrollable. Parenting of this type leaves children with control over children’s behavior. One might not see the connection between strict corporal punishment and medical management however both are designed to make a uncontrollable , willful children into a docile obedient one.

The word discipline has the base word of disciple. Discipline by definition means to train someone using punishment. Disciple means a learner or pupil. What I find interesting is that all the above philosophies were created in direct relation to educational methods. Whether one holds the belief as Wesley did that a child is born with Original Sin or Rousseau ideology that a child is a blank slate with no inborn sins or good traits, people believe that children can be taught to be good.

The mode of teaching this good is where they differ. Discipline refers to training and experience that corrects, molds, and strengthens individuals’ mental faculties and moral character. It also refers to punishment which

intends to correct and which is enforced by those in authority or may be self-imposed. Discipline refers to the control gained by enforcing obedience, and it refers to the systematic orderly behavior defined society and the times that the society lives in.