



Promoting Positive Discipline for Preschoolers at Homes and Schools การส่งเสริมวินัยเชิงบวกสำหรับเด็กก่อนวัยเรียนที่บ้านและโรงเรียน

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Abstract

When developing their language and communication skills, preschoolers learn through their senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight) and through play. Play is crucial to the overall development of preschoolers' emotional, intellectual, social, and motor skills for this age group. Dealing with misbehavior in preschoolers both at home and at school are common in concept but differ in setting and roles. This paper sought to provide readers an understanding of preschoolers' development in all aspects, as well as to show parents and teachers an effective approach to deal with children in healthy and enjoyable ways. The most effective approach, which this paper focuses on, is known as Positive Discipline (PD) inspired by the writing of Dr.Jane Nelsen. PD utilizes non-violent, consistent, and firm guidance from adults which is positive and respectful of the children. It is the job of parents and teachers to give children positive alternatives and to acknowledge and/or reward efforts and good behaviors. In addition, adult leadership, guidance, love, and the cooperation between home and school are important for preschoolers. PD affects children positively in the long term, helping them become more responsible, self-confident, independent, and life-long problem solvers. It also helps them develop self-discipline and positive capabilities and attitudes. These characteristics lead them to become well-behaved and successful adults in the future.

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Keywords

Preschool Education, Positive Discipline

บทคัดย่อ

เด็กก่อนวัยเรียนพัฒนาทักษะด้านภาษาและการสื่อสารโดยเรียนรู้ผ่านสัมผัส (สัมผัส รส กลิ่น เสียง และรูป) และการเล่น การเล่นส่งเสริมพัฒนาการทักษะด้านอารมณ์ สังคม ศติปัญญา และก้ามเนื้อ ในร่างกายของเด็กก่อนวัยเรียน การจัดการกับพฤติกรรมที่ไม่พึงประสงค์ที่บ้านและที่โรงเรียนคล้ายกันที่แนวคิด แต่ต่างกันที่บทบาทและสถานที่ บทความนี้ประสงค์ให้ผู้อ่านเข้าใจพัฒนาการทั่วไปทุกด้านของเด็กวัยนี้ และเสนอวิธีจัดการกับพฤติกรรมที่ไม่พึงประสงค์ที่ดีต่อสุขภาพและเป็นที่น่าพอใจแก่ผู้ปกครองและครู วิธีที่ได้ผลดีที่บทความนี้จะเป็นคือ วินัยเชิงบวก (PD) ที่ได้แรงบันดาลใจจากการเขียนของ Dr. Jane Nelsen วินัยเชิงบวกไม่ใช่ความรุนแรง ใช้คำแนะนำของผู้ใหญ่ที่มั่นคงและเคารพในตัวเด็ก หน้าที่ของผู้ปกครอง และครูคือให้ทางเลือกที่สร้างสรรค์ ยอมรับ และ/หรือให้รางวัลแก่ความพยายามหรือพฤติกรรมที่ดี อีกทั้ง ความเป็นผู้นำ คำแนะนำ ความรัก และความร่วมมือระหว่างบ้านและโรงเรียนมีความสำคัญต่อเด็กก่อนวัยเรียน วินัยเชิงบวกมีผลดีต่อเด็กและเยาวชนโดยช่วยให้เป็นคนที่มีความรับผิดชอบขึ้น มั่นใจ เป็นตัวของตัวเอง และแก้ไขปัญหาต่างๆ เองได้ รวมถึงช่วยให้สามารถควบคุมตนเอง มีความสามารถและทัศนคติทางบวก คุณลักษณะเหล่านี้นำพากลับให้เติบโตเป็นผู้ใหญ่ที่มีพุติกรรมที่ดีและประสบความสำเร็จในอนาคต

คำสำคัญ

การศึกษาสำหรับเด็กก่อนวัยเรียน วินัยเชิงบวก

Introduction

At home, children's behaviors are often natural to them and parents often face misbehaviors that come with the self-centered mindset of young children. However, while at school, student misbehavior can disrupt the overall management of a classroom. Some of these misbehaviors include disrespectful attitudes, distracting others, talking out of turn, or touching and licking inappropriately. Parents or teachers may adopt coercive means or punishment to stop the undesired behaviors immediately. Examples of these include name-calling, giving 'don't' commands, threatening, yelling, and actions intended to humiliate the misbehaving child.

Michigan State University Extension (Silm, 2013) suggested that punishment is controlling or regulating a child's behavior through fear. As the result, children learn to be careful when and how they behave when you are looking putting the responsibility for managing behavior on the adult rather than the child. This is not effective in helping children learn self-control or making better



behavior choices. In contrast, it can discourage them from trying to do things because they do not want to bring on shame or pain that can cause the more challenging, manipulative, or disobedient behaviors. Moreover, parents and caregivers often experience much more stress and frustration which can impact their health and wellbeing as they constantly need to be on the watch for their child's poor behavior.

While punishment aims to stop misbehavior in a certain way, 'Positive Discipline' (PD) can be employed to guide a child, showing he or she how to behave through less aggressive means. It is intended to teach children to develop their self-control, to be in harmony with themselves and others, understand their behaviors, take responsibility for themselves, and to respect themselves and others. According to Assali (2015, 8) PD is a teaching and parenting model that strikes a balance between two main consideration: effective teaching on the one hand and respecting the rights of the child on the other hand. Furthermore, Positivediscipline.com (2018) shown that PD have been studied and shown to be effective in changing teachers, parents, and especially to students positively. For example, teachers reported improvement in classroom atmosphere; behavior; attitudes; and academic performance, parents did more problem solving with their children and were less autocratic in decision making, students are at lower risk for using drugs and improved academic performance.

This paper aims to provide readers an understanding of preschoolers' development in all aspects, as well as to show parents and teachers an effective approach to deal with children in healthy and enjoyable ways. The general development of preschool-age children will be discussed first, followed by a more detailed description of PD. The ways to apply positive discipline at home and school will be explored in the latter part of this paper.

Preschoolers (3-6 years old)

Chopra (1997,35) stated that the most vital aspect of the preschool years is building a child's sense of self-esteem. It provides the readiness to go outside the family to encounter the world which is identified with tasks and challenges. Through toilet training and learning to eat by his or herself, a child begins to realize the self and become self-centered. The growing self-awareness at this age may manifest itself in a child shouting, screaming, running around, and wielding the all-powerful word of "No."

Moreover, this age group develops more socially, has real friendships and understands the causes of feelings. Physically they are much more coordinated in high-energy activities such



as running and climbing. Some at this age may have progressed to riding a tricycle. Their social-emotional development can be seen in how they build their self-awareness in such respects as gender and age. They also start building relationships with others, showing empathy and engaging in constructive behaviors like taking turns or cooperating and collaborating with one another.

With regards to language development, children learn easy-to-make sounds first (from p, m, h and w then f, s, z, and lastly, the digraphs--ch, sh, or th). They will put them together to form words and, eventually, short sentences. To learn language and the grammatical rules, a child needs to hear as much of the spoken language as possible with the correct modeling. Reading to children helps enhance language skills by allowing them to hear the rhythm of the words, sentences, and syntax; it also has the added benefit of helping to develop a child's attention span. Cognitive development at the preschool age provides children with a significant ability to learn, think, reason, remember, and problem solve, yet they still possess a one-sided reasoning. Overall, this age group will be eager and ready to learn, and proud of their accomplishments. However, it must be noted that each child develops at different rates, in his or her own ways. (Carson-Dellosa Publishing LLC, 2011, 22-47)

Positive Discipline (PD)

PD is a research-based theory which originated with early pioneers of Adlerian, or the Individual Psychology. It was developed by Austrian psychiatrist/professor Alfred Adler (1870-1937) and his student Rudolf Dreikurs (1897-1972) (Positivediscipline.com, 2018). According to Chew (1998, 5-10), Adlerian Psychology holds to five basic concepts regarding childhood development: 1) The sense of belonging or being accepted by other children and adults (if this remains unfulfilled, a child will become anxious and unhappy); 2) Personality has a pattern that takes shape based on circumstances; 3) Behavior or misbehavior has a purpose; 4) A child's striving for significance and his or her behavior reflects his or her current concept of self; and 5) The importance of a child's heredity and environment, and how he or she makes sense of these factors.

To deal with misbehavior, Adlerian thought argues that it is important to understand the goals of such misbehavior. These are: 1) To get attention; 2) To seek the power over adults; 3) To avenge their feelings of being hurt; and 4) To mask feelings of inadequacy by avoiding participation or contribution. In pursuing these goals, children may be either active or passive, depending on their self-confidence, which is established in early childhood. Four types of behavior can result:

1) Active-constructive (the desire to be good, or even a “teacher’s pet”); 2) Active-destructive (seeking attention through bullying, acting defiant, and showing off); 3) Passive-constructive (trying to gain approval by always doing what one is told); and 4) Passive-destructive (being lazy, stubborn, shy, bashful, late, etc.) (Chew, 1998, 36-40).

Nelson (2006, 142-147) also points out some factors to take into account when determining a child’s behavior tendencies, such as birth order and the amounts of encouragement and respect received by others. Birth order is an early means by which a child interprets his or her place in the world and point of view. A sense of respect can be promoted by taking interest in the point of view of a child. Encouragement, though, is key to the idea of PD. Encouragement from others helps children believe, “I am capable” and “I can influence what happens to me or how I respond.” These are mindsets children need to become responsible and successful adults.

PD at home

Parents in modern society have to face many new parenting challenges such as an increasingly competitive educational environment--in addition to their own stresses from work and life. It can lead to them feeling challenged and confused by today’s children, who in many ways are totally different from them. The main approaches that parents mostly use can divided into 3 types: strictness (order without freedom), permissiveness (freedom without order), and positive discipline (freedom with order). Strictness always comes with punishment, which can stop poor behavior immediately but only temporarily. A permissive approach, meanwhile, tends to make children become tyrannical, able to manipulate others into fulfilling their demands. On the other hand, when parents take the PD approach, they may find that a child will initially misbehave again, as a way of “testing” how their parents will react the second time. When they know that manipulation will not work, their misbehavior will scale back. Along the way, they develop the life skills and characteristics they need when they grow up.

Nelsen (2006, 6) suggested that most misbehavior can be caused by a lack of development in seven significant perceptions and skills: 1) personal capabilities, 2) primary relationships, 3) personal power over life, 4) intrapersonal skills (self-discipline and self-control), 5) interpersonal skills (working with and developing friendships with others), 6) systematic skills (responsibility, adaptability, flexibility, and integrity), and 7) judgmental skills. These causes should also be taken into consideration alongside the previously stated four goals (attention, power, revenge, and inadequacy) behind childhood misbehavior. Once a parent is aware of the causes



and goals of misbehavior, the next step is to employ the PD approach, which should manifest itself in kindness (showing respect for the child) and firmness (showing respect for themselves and for the needs of the situation), in a respectful and encouraging way. Such a strategy must help children feel a sense of belonging and significance in the long-term, contrasting with the negative long-term effects of punishment (despite its short-term effectiveness). In tandem with a PD approach, adults also have to teach the valuable social and life skills for good character (respect, concern for others, problem solving, accountability, contribution, cooperation).

The keywords in applying PD at home are “Love” and “Encouragement.” A parents’ job is to create a positive environment by making children feel safe, encouraged, understood, and loved unconditionally. They tend to be ready to listen and cooperate if adults express an understanding of their feelings and show empathy, as well as sharing feelings of closeness, trust, sincerity, friendliness, and calm. In terms of encouragement, which inspires children to continue their efforts and build on strengths rather than weaknesses, Chew (1998, 63) stated that it focuses on effort and improvement, by acknowledging the child’s strengths and contributions, helping the child gain confidence and perseverance. It is also important to instill in children that “It is ok to make mistakes, because mistakes are the great opportunities to learn.”

Moreover, building responsibility and cooperation should start at home. Parents should promote their children’s sense of confidence by letting them experience his or her own strengths and abilities and allowing them to take responsibility for his/herself in family and social groups. This approach offers them opportunities for them to discover their capabilities by learning from experience (Chew, 1998,57). Children learn responsibility when they have opportunities to learn valuable social and life skills in an atmosphere of kindness, firmness, dignity, and respect (Nelsen, 2006, 5). This leads children to become respectful of themselves and others. Providing a good parental role model and working with children can foster an atmosphere of cooperation; such an atmosphere is the key for promoting communication and problem-solving skills, which enhance the quality of a child’s interpersonal relationships and sense of social responsibility. Activities that help accomplish the goals mentioned above include setting up family meetings, engaging a child to solve a problem, setting routines, creating family activities, helping to cook meals, and so on.

When conflict does occur at home, the “Peaceful Time-out” allows both children and adults to cool off, giving them time to calm enough to think rationally through the conflict. Preschoolers learn from adults’ actions, not their words. When parents feel upset, it is important for them to calm down until they feel better. Once this is done, the problem can be solved smoothly and respectfully, with cooperation from both sides. Positive time-out strategies include setting up a time-out corner, going for a walk, and reading.



PD at School

Generally, all children have the basic emotional needs to feel loved, secure, wanted, and valued. The purpose of discipline in the preschool classroom is to ensure the safety of all children and to encourage respect for others and for property. To achieve this, a well-organized classroom and well-organized lesson plan are needed. Teachers should aim to create a positive and supportive learning environment, creating a safe, orderly, organized, and comfortable classroom, being sure that everyone can be seen and seated. Occasionally holding class outside or in another part of the school can be used as a technique to promote group activities and enhance a friendly learning environment. It is essential for teachers to manage classroom materials, as well as being prepared and organized in advance, making transitions between activities smoother. Also vital is setting up clear, comprehensible classroom routines and rules, so that students know what is expected of them. (UNESCO, 2006, 65-71)

Misbehavior is a part of childhood development. All misbehaviors have psychological causes behind them, family and home life being the biggest of these. As a teacher, it is important to take into account the backgrounds and differences of each child, as well as his or her home environment and parents. Teachers should respect these differences and empathize with the children's abilities, situations and environment, taking them as they are, not as they should be. As previously mentioned, if children feel that they are understood and empathized with, they will trust their teachers more. A positive relationship with consistent discipline makes misbehavior decrease and the quality of the teacher-student relationship will be improved.

According to UNESCO (2006, 39-44), the reasons why children misbehave at school can be related to how they relate to classroom tasks. For example, they may find the work too easy or too hard or not interesting enough. The teacher's methods may not fit their learning style or the teacher's expectations may be unclear or unreasonable. Additionally, a student may not be prepared, or is dealing with poor social skills or low self-esteem. Misbehavior has four goals: attention, power, revenge, and avoidance of failure (or inadequacy). UNESCO's study suggests that a child's goal in a specific instance of misbehavior can be ascertained by the teacher's own feelings when the incident occurs. The teacher can then apply the solutions described in Table 1 below.



Table 1

The Four Goals of Misbehavior and Solutions

Goal	Teacher's Feeling	Solution Techniques
Attention	Annoyed	Never give attention on demand, ignore, praise for being good, teach children how to ask for attention, stand close, do the unexpected such as turn off classroom lights
Power	Angry and provoked	Put he or she in a position of responsibility
Revenge	Hurt	Build a caring and trusting relationship, teach children to express their feelings
Inadequacy	Frustrated and wanting to give up	Start where they are; do not use criticism or pity, encourage successes they achieve

Note: The contents above adapted from UNESCO (2006), Chew (1998), & Nelsen (2006)

In order to make a learning-friendly classroom, teachers can keep the following suggestions in mind. 1) Speaking softly, waiting for everyone to quiet down before beginning the lesson. A soft-spoken teacher often has a calmer, quieter classroom than one with a stronger voice. 2) Beginning class by telling the children what they will be doing. 3) During working time, teachers should walk around the classroom, checking on the students' progress but trying not to interrupt. 4) Using non-verbal cues to get the class's attention, possibly through using a bell or clickers. 5) Sharing details about the teacher's own interests, family, or hobbies, allowing the children to get to know them better. 6) Anticipating problems before they occur.

Parents and Teachers Working Together Along with PD

This part of the paper will describe how parents and teachers work together in terms of promoting PD both at home and school as a team.

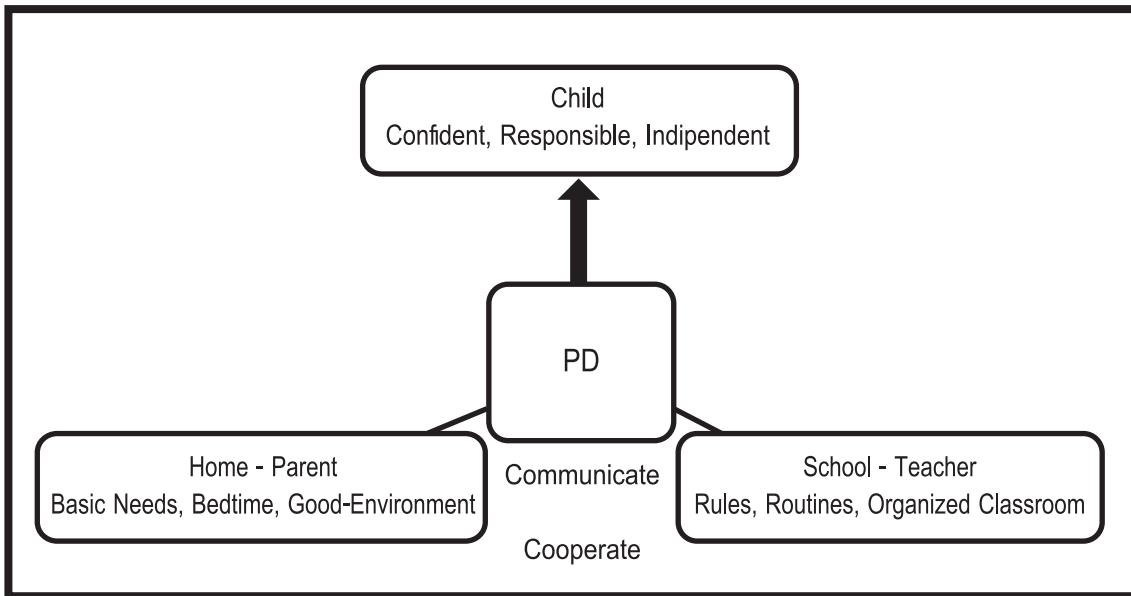


Figure 1: Parents and teachers work together for preschoolers with PD

Note: This figure originally created by the author for this paper

As shown in Figure 1, In the author's point of view, for parents at home, it is important to support each child in all aspects; physical, mental, and spiritual. Parents' major responsibility is to be in charge of raising each child to become a valuable member of the community. The undertaking requires love, care, understanding, and the ability to guide them on the right path. As mentioned in the previous part, preschoolers are developing from toddlers to become school children. They are meeting daily developmental challenges. The basic needs, regular meals, and bedtime help to support their development in all aspects. The outside world is new and challenging to them. For this reason, parents should provide predictable routines, a safe-calm-orderly and fun atmosphere to help preschoolers feel safe and secure at home in the first place.

Meanwhile, at school, preschool teachers have an important job to shape a child's relationship with him or herself, others, and the world. Teachers help them build confidence, a sense of importance, and inquiry about the world through play and hands on activities (music, art, movement, etc.,.). Teachers also have to organize the classroom, materials, and activities to support the climate of mutual respect and dignity and be prepared to teach. By all means, the school policies, rules, regulations, and routines should be communicated in the beginning of the school year. Beside the educational pedagogy, methodology, classroom management, and so forth, PD can be applied as the technique to deal with the misbehaviors at school.



Notably, neither parents nor teachers could apply PD successfully without help from each other. The next key to take in consideration is good communication. Parents and teachers are able to work together toward a common goal if they communicate with one another regularly. In order to avoid misunderstandings and to promote a sense of team work, parents might send teachers an email or call them to let them know about the kids' situation such as, sickness, dealing with family issues, or learning progress. On the other hand, teachers should contact parents on important issues at school for example, change in behaviors, the academic performance, class attendance, and so on. Still, in the author's opinion regarding communication, there are some issues to be aware of. One issue as mentioned, such as the time of contact, should be communicated appropriately and early. How and when, there is any problem regarding the child, it should be reported immediately or early rather than something getting worse, or to avoid discussing negative issues in front of other parents or kids.

In addition, in terms of cooperation, education of the children is a joint responsibility of the parents and schools. Parents are expected to know the school rules and to help children follow them. They should build good relationships with teachers, other parents, and children. All parents have to provide a place for study at home and ensure homework/assignments are completed. Whereas, at school, teachers should meet with parents to talk about the expectations of students, course details, assessments, or classroom discipline plans, and so on. In short, in the author's stance, to achieve interactive cooperation, it needs trust and respect from both sides. After that, to become a team, it can be established by involving each other to help children succeed. The healthy cooperation, as mentioned beforehand, must to create a problem-solving partnership instead of confrontation, support the parenting or learning activities, and provide the participants in school decisions/surveys, and so on.

From above, the preparation and work from both home and school, as well as their communication and cooperation, support to promote the PD for preschoolers. Regarding PD, it is necessary that the adults should be consistent and firm, but at the same time teach children what is proper and expected. Also, they have to train and facilitate children with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to make appropriate choices and guide them in making those choices by using consistent, loving, respectful, and guide the age-appropriate consequences. These characteristics can guide them to become a confident, responsible, and independent adults in the future.



Conclusion

Preschoolers range in age from 3 to 6 years old. During this stage, they are developing their social skills and their ability to cooperate with others. As the part of their development, they may misbehave in certain ways to test their physical, behavioral, and emotional limits. This misbehavior can have one or more of four goals: attention, power, revenge, and avoidance of failure. Parents and teachers might employ punishment that might stop misbehavior immediately, but can result in negative long-term effect, such as reduced self-esteem, sneakiness, and revenge. Because of this, another approach, PD is suggested. PD consists of non-violent, consistent, and firm guidance from adults which is positive and respectful of the children. An adult's role in childhood development is to give children positive alternatives and acknowledging or rewarding efforts and good behaviors. Children follow rules because they are discussed and agreed upon.

At home, a parent's deepest desire is to see one's child achieve success in life and live happily. Children learn from their parents' actions rather than their words, remembering how their parents' words made them feel more than the words themselves. Besides needing a safe environment, preschoolers need parents as good models and examples. In the PD approach, the first concern of a parent should be to understand his or her own child and the factors that can affect their behavior, such as birth order, personality, and other characteristics. When misbehavior occurs, PD should be applied in a kind and firm manner, treating children with dignity and respect. Parents should also allow their children opportunities to experience responsibility, brainstorming with them to find out the solutions to the problems which caused the misbehavior.

At school, well-organized classrooms, lessons, activities, and materials should be priorities, making sure that all children learn in a safe and friendly environment. A good relationship between teachers and children is essential. Teachers must understand each child in context, including their limitations, family backgrounds and learning styles. When dealing with challenging students, it is important for them to address the situation rather than targeting the child personally. Teachers should keep in mind that misbehavior has causes and that by finding these causes they can begin showing a child the way to more positive behavior. The most important thing is to demonstrate professional behavior and a positive attitude to children.

In addition, the communication-cooperation between parents and teachers is also important. Parents have to show respect and support for their child, teachers, school, and the school's discipline policy. They have to provide a supportive environment for learning and assist with school activities as well. As much as, teachers have to provide clear evaluations of children's progress



and achievements, set up formal and informal parent-teacher and teacher-student meetings with active participation on both sides.

Finally, as PD is a new approach requiring a great change in behavior from parents, teachers, and even children as a whole. The material presented here is just a small overview of the PD approach. No approach is perfect, as each family, child, and teacher are unique and different. But PD can work well both at home and at school if parents and teachers are patient, friendly, understand the situations and problems, and accepting of children's choices.

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