



Differences between Discipline and Punishment

(Adapted with permission from the Canadian Red Cross Child Abuse Prevention Program for Adolescents.)

Although there are many complex issues surrounding the topics of discipline and punishment, there are real differences between discipline that helps a child, and punishment/abuse that hurts a child. Punishment may stop behaviour in the short term, but discipline has positive, long-term effects on the child, teaching them things that benefit their growth and selfhood.

The differences between discipline and punishment are also based on the attitude of the parent and the feeling created in the child:

DISCIPLINE:

- thoughtful and deliberate
- uses constructive energy
- logically connected to the child's behaviour
- deals with the present problem
- no danger to the child's physical and/or emotional well being
- reasonable and moderate
- no humiliation or submission
- focuses on the behaviour, and doesn't condemn the child
- doesn't take advantage of the child's dependent position
- respects the child's right
- demonstrates love and affection

ABUSE:

- impulsive and out of control
- uses destructive force
- isn't logically connected to the child's behaviour
- often deals with past problems
- puts the child in danger of physical and/or emotional injury
- unfair and extreme
- humiliates the child, or forces submission
- exaggerates the problem, condemning the whole child as bad
- exploits the power imbalance between parent and child
- disregards the child's rights
- demonstrates anger and hostility