

## DISCIPLINE AND OBEDIENCE

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### 1 Why do we try to discipline our children?

This is an introductory question to be discussed briefly (i.e. for 2 to 5 minutes) **BEFORE** reading the Discussion Paper.

**Purpose of this question:** to get the participants to start thinking about why they are disciplining their kids and what goals they hope to achieve.

#### **Questions/Issues for Discussion**

The Group Leader should **not** give any answers, but simply ask open ended questions such as:

- why do we discipline them?
- what goal do we have in mind?
- is discipline an end in itself or is it directed towards achieving something else?
- is it something we need to think about?

After 2 to 5 minutes, finish the discussion and ask one of the participants to read aloud **only** the first four paragraphs of the Discussion Paper under the heading "Discipline – Its Aims". See if anyone has any further brief comments, then proceed to questions 2. **Do not read** any more of the Discussion Paper until after question 2 has been discussed.

#### 2 What are some of the main difficulties encountered by parents in disciplining their children?

**Purpose of this question:** to get the participants to air their own views about problems with disciplining children.

#### **Questions/Issues for Discussion**

- Start by just asking what they think are the main problems we as parents face.
- Prompt them if necessary with open ended questions like:
  - is it just a matter of whether you have a difficult or easy child (i.e. luck of the draw)?
  - is it mainly problems with the children themselves (if so, are these problems any different today to what they have been in previous generations)?

- is it mainly problems with parents (e.g. lack of parenting skills, lack of effort or time)?
- is it lack of support from:
  - family – not enough wider support from extended family?
  - friends – negative peer influence?
  - society – consumer society pushing different values to ours?
  - school – not backing up parents' values?
- towards the end of the discussion ask them "how well parents understand and use their authority?".

### 3 **How (at a practical level) do we exercise our authority in a loving way towards our children?**

**Start** by reading the "Authority" section of the discussion paper. **Do not read** the obedience section yet.

**Purpose of this Question:** is for the group to try to come up with practical ideas on how to exercise their authority consistently with the principles set out in the discussion paper.

#### **Questions/issues for Discussion:**

- What sort of "punishment" or "sanctions" are consistent with exercise of loving authority?
  - are certain types of punishment simply inconsistent with loving authority, or is the method used not as important as the motive?
  - suggested criteria: we can use whatever method works best for the child, so long as:
    - it's used to enforce a legitimate rule or goal that the child understands (not to enforce our personal annoyance or whim);
    - we do not lose our temper (we may need to show controlled anger or strong words to show we mean business but we should not "loose it");
  - ask for examples of how to apply this criteria to use of the following methods:
    - withdrawal of privilege (e.g. TV or treat);
    - "time out" (or sent to room);
    - smacking;

- ask for examples of using the above methods badly.
- Importance of making up quickly and being affectionate as soon as possible after the punishment
  - Reinforces in the child's mind that the child is always loved and accepted but bad behaviour is not.
- How do we use rewards?
  - Rewards/treats to keep the peace or to reinforce the achieving of goals.
  - Rewards/treats to indulge our own whims? Do we set the example?
- What do we do when we misuse our authority (for example by punishing out of annoyance and temper, instead of for a legitimate reason)?
  - We are bound to do this from time to time – we are only human.
  - Importance of parents saying sorry and admitting when wrong helps the child distinguish between legitimate use of authority (and the values that are truly important) and parents' inevitable personal failings.
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#### 4 **How do we get them to do what they are told?**

**Purpose of this Question:** To come up with concrete practical suggestions to get them to obey.

##### **Questions/Issues for discussion**

- Importance of prioritising the most important issues and never giving in on these: e.g. flagrant rudeness/lying.
- No treat/snack if do not do job.
- Smack or time out for flagrant rudeness – lies.
- Do not give in to crying/tantrums:
  - correct them firmly;
  - escalate to a smack or timeout if necessary;
  - leave them in room/outside back door till they stop;
  - they must say sorry when its all over.
- Lots of warmth and affection afterwards.
- Do not cover for them if trouble at school – let them face the music.

## 5 How do we teach them to obey for the right motives?

### *Questions/Issues for Discussion*

- What reasons should we give for why they should do what we ask?
  - love for Mum and Dad and the others.
- How?
  - from early age emphasize:
    - how important their role in the family is and how we rely on them to behave well and help out;
    - how happy it makes Mum and Dad if they are good and contribute at home (back this up with gratitude and affection when good);
    - indicate sadness when not good.
  - we obey and help because we want to help Mum, Dad and the others and please them – not because Mum and Dad will be cranky if we don't.