

EXCERPTS FROM
ENERGETIC PARENTING & DISCIPLINE

Natural consequences are always appropriate, punishments are not. Punitive parenting may be easy, but it is never very successful. The soul consequences for a child treated consistently in a harsh and spiteful way can be long reaching, if not permanent. An externally critical and disapproving environment creates within the child a harsh and unforgiving inner critic. These children, as adults, are individuals who just can't seem to erase the negative tapes from their childhoods. Those children who are raised conscientiously and with intention, however, are blessed with a healthy sense of self and the ability to forgive themselves as well as others.

The most common parenting practices of today use behaviorally based techniques. These children are raised by the administration of rewards and punishments. Energetic parenting is *not* behavioral in its approach. The child's unique energetic stage and type is evaluated and honored. Parents use this information to help them nurture their child while setting appropriate limits. When a symptom arises signaling a deeper issue, energetic parenting searches for the energetic cause and treats the source. Behavioral parenting treats the symptom, neglecting to seek the deeper causation.

Parents who become angry with their children and who have difficulty owning their anger are at risk of becoming punitive. The idea of punishment is attractive to us when we are angry. For we desire not only to teach the lesson, but to send a little pain along with that lesson. Embarrassment or frustration can fan these flames. If we are not careful the idea of training or teaching gets lost.

Three-year-old Amy is at a restaurant with her mother. After placing their food order and spending some time coloring the children's menu, mother decides it is time to visit the bathroom and wash hands. Mom and daughter excuse themselves, leaving dad and grandparents to visit in

their absence. Upon reaching the bathroom, mom hoists her daughter up to the sink, propping her child upon her left knee as she turns on the water. Amy loves the water, frequently splashing in the dishwasher and the tub with mom at home. Giggling with delight at the prospect of squirting pink soap from the soap dispenser, Amy begins to slap at the bubbles and splash the water. I noticed, as an observer in this bathroom, that mom was totally oblivious to her daughter's playfulness. Intent on washing up and returning to the table, mom attempts to wash her daughter's hands while balancing her awkwardly. The moment she reaches for Amy's hands, Amy pulls away, squealing as the bubbly foam grows inside the sink.

"Alright then, fine!" mom declares impatiently. "Forget it." In one brisk motion, she deposits her daughter on the floor. "Now stand still," she directs as she grabs some paper towels and brusquely wipes the little girl's hands. Amy begins to wail, crushed by her mother's obvious anger. Mom gives her a quick swat on the leg and tells her she better be a good girl for grandma and grandpa. Confused and sad, the little girl continues to cry loudly as they leave the restroom.

How different this scene would have played out if mom had been in touch energetically with her daughter. Playful and effusive during this stage of development, Amy's playfulness was predictable and on target. An appropriate response from mom could have re-framed the situation and left parent and child feeling close. Mom could have approached this circumstance using either of the following solutions, helping Amy to feel nurtured and connected:

- A) "I know you want to play, Amy, but we need to get back to grandma and grandpa as soon as we can. How fast do you think that you can wash your hands?" Mom could have channeled the playfulness in a way that would have honored Amy while setting boundaries.
- B) "Oh, so you want to splash do you?" Whereupon, mom could take part in momentary splashing and playing with bubbles. "Alright now, enough. We need to get back to the table. Who is going to get their hands dry first, you or me??" This approach again, honors while setting limits.