

## PSA Bulletin

### This week let's talk about 'Discipline'

How do we discipline?

You may have seen in the news this week that 'smacking' has been a topic of conversation recently. It is likely that each of us as parents have our own varying experiences of childhood; some of us will have encountered physical punishments and others less so. It is also likely that your own childhood experiences have shaped some of your parenting morals, beliefs and habits.

When I talk with parents about how they manage 'difficult behaviours' that are displayed by their children, I ask a couple of key questions: **"What is the function of the behaviour?"** for the child and as the adult **"Are you seeking to Punish or Discipline?"**

Have you ever heard it said that 'we took away smacking but did not come up with a replacement' or 'in my day, a good smack would have worked' ...

In response to this, my argument is that 'old-fashioned' punishment can be replaced by more effective compassionate discipline.

**Punishments can be considered anything which uses 'Blame, Shame or Pain' and ultimately FEAR which does not create long term behaviour change.**

**Discipline** means 'to learn' and we can teach by **using consequences.**

It can also be much more productive if we try to understand the function and cause of the behaviours.

*Anger outbursts and meltdowns are signs that the child is not managing their emotions. These often impact on the whole family, eat away at the relationship you have with your child and can lead parents to feeling overwhelmed or 'stuck'. As the adults it is our role to help children learn how to manage their emotions as they grow.*

**We can use the 'Emotional Cup' analogy as a tool to help us understand what makes us erupt.**

Think about your own 'cup' and the stressors that fill it each day. Imagine that you do not empty any of that stress and tomorrow you wake and continue adding to it. The cup will overflow. This will be your meltdown. The same applies to children.



Consequences must always be

- Respectful (delivered calmly)
- Related to the misbehaviour (not willy-nilly consequences!)
- Reasonable in duration
- Revealed in advance (give a warning so the child has time to make the right choice)
- Repeated back (get the child to repeat back to you both the RULE and the CONSEQUENCE for not following the rule)





Their 'stressors' are anything that fills their cup. **Cup fillers** tend to cause the production of Cortisol in the brain (a stress hormone).

Examples could be, worries, changes to routines, demands, hectic schedules, transitions, sensory stimuli or even exciting / stimulating things!

**Remember a person's cup may well not be empty at the start of the day, so could easily overflow with very little cup fillers being added.**

How do we each empty our cups and how do we help our children to do so?

A **Cup emptier** will essentially calm the nervous system.

- ✓ **Relaxation techniques** – work on slow breathing! We massively underestimate the power of slow deep breaths when we are beginning to feel stress
- ✓ **Activities which bring joy** – anything that absorbs attention and brings pleasure
- ✓ **Calming sensory feedback** – work out what calms and soothes (its different for each of us)  
A warm drink? Dim lighting? Relaxing music? A cuddle? Lavender bath? Being outside in nature?
- ✓ **Social connection** – this helps us to feel safe as opposed to alone. 'Time in' can be more valuable than a 'time-out'. Calm, warm body language, a smile and a soothing tone of voice will all help.  
Sometimes social connection is not possible face to face but can still be achieved by a call / msg / engaging online.
- ✓ **Exercise** – this will literally burn off cortisol and stimulate the production of happy hormones
- ✓ **Rest** – Many of us are not very good at 'Switching off' and we are therefore not role-modelling this to our children. We need to stop being busy all of the time. We need to stop multi-tasking. Rest is different to sleep. Try factoring in some 'down-time' to just chill doing something calming. Read a book (without the TV on), listen to some music whilst laying down, take a bath without distraction, bird watch, enjoy the garden, watch a movie (but leave other devices away from reach)

*When we forget to focus on the cup, we can experience more meltdowns / outbursts. Practice removing cup fillers and adding cup emptier's to your day!*

**How to contact me:**

It's never too soon to make contact if you have any concerns. You can reach me via text on the PSA mobile **07903 613074** or via email,

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Normal working days are Tuesday and Wednesday 8.00-16.00 and Thursday 8.00-13:00