



Module Twenty-One: Relationship is the Root of All Influence

This section is devoted to the Glasser Quality School program, however, much of what will be presented, also parallels Lead Management and parenting.

Relationship is the root of all influence. Do you believe that? Not counting times when you were under some type of coercion or external control, who were the people who had a significant positive impact on your life? Was it people you cared for, who loved and respected you or were they people who mistreated you? Who do you want to give your best to? When do you want to come up with creative ways to get the job done?

It's usually when inspired to do so by someone you believe cares about and holds you to a high level. It's someone you have an important, positive relationship with. If you really want to have influence in someone's life, then your best chance of doing so is creating a need-satisfying relationship with that person.

Fear and Obedience vs. Respect

In schools, there is often an emphasis on students respecting teachers. There will be teachers who demand it. It is often a lament I hear from teachers and administrators that students today just have no respect. A more accurate statement would be that students today do not blindly respect adults simply because they are older and more experienced.

Today, respect is a two-way street and it often must be earned. Gone are the days when a teacher can stand in front of a room of students demanding to be respected. "I'm the teacher. You will respect me!" Today's student does not typically respond well to statements like that. They tend to want to know, "Do you respect me?"

I'm not here to argue whether one way is wrong and another way is right. I'm simply accepting the reality of what actually exists and am presenting my strategy around it.

Let's begin by looking at the work of cellular biologist, Dr. Bruce Lipton. Dr. Lipton teaches that cells are in either of two positions. They can't be in both simultaneously. They are either in growth or protection. If a cell is in protection, it cannot grow or learn. Conversely, if a cell is learning and growing, it cannot be protecting itself.

The very first question we should be asking about school is, "Is this a safe place to be? Does this student feel safe and protected here?" As you remember from the section on Lead Management, there is a lot that goes into creating that feeling of safety. You must ask yourself, does each and every student feel safe while with me?

It is impossible to expect a student who is fearful to learn. This has huge implications for the concepts of discipline and punishment.

Discipline vs. Punishment

In order to better understand the difference between discipline and punishment, I'd like to go to the Latin root of both words. The Latin root of discipline is "discipulus," which means student or pupil. Therefore, whenever a teacher or parent is disciplining a child, he or she should be teaching a better way to do something rather than punishing a child.

The Latin root for punishment is "punire," which means to inflict pain. If your goal in punishing a child is to inflict "pain" so he or she will learn a lesson, let's look at the lesson that will actually be learned.

If cells are only in one of two positions--protection or growth--then which one would be invoked by inflicting pain? Protection, of course. If a child is scared and goes into protection mode, can he or she learn? NO--it's not possible to learn while in protection. What the child will learn is how to avoid the punisher or how to avoid getting caught. This is generally not the lesson the punisher wants the child to learn.

Consequences

Another often misunderstood word is the word, "consequences." Because of the popularity of behavior modification programs, people have come to equate consequences with punishment. It is usually thought to be the doling out of something painful by the teacher to a student who has "misbehaved."

What's wrong with this definition? Webster describes consequence as "that which follows as the result of some preceding act, cause, etc." It does not distinguish whether or not it is a positive, negative or neutral result. It is simply the effect of something that happens. If you go outside in the winter without a coat on, the likely consequence is that you will be cold. If you get into fights with people regularly, the natural consequence is that no one will like you.

Consequences occur all the time. Think of them as the ripple in the pond when you throw a rock in the water. You throw the rock, ripples occur. It's a consequence. No rock, no ripples.

Somewhere in our human history, we decided not only was it a good idea, but it was our responsibility to dole out consequences for acts deemed as unacceptable, in an attempt to get the person to not engage in that behavior again. Jail or prison time is usually looked at as the "consequence" for breaking the law. If negative punishment were effective, then jail would

correct the problem and there would be no repeat offenders. We know how well that works! It doesn't.

Natural vs. Imposed Consequences

When working with children, it's important to distinguish between natural and imposed consequences. Natural consequences are what happen when you don't intervene. A child who touches a hot stove will get burned. That's the natural consequence of touching something hot. Smacking a child's hand or sending him to his bedroom for touching the stove is an imposed consequence. It involves an action on your part.

Whenever you are attempting to build the kind of relationship that will have influence, you want to rely on natural consequences to teach the lesson and avoid imposed consequences whenever possible. You want to teach, not punish or inflict pain.

However, there will be times when imposed consequences are necessary and this usually happens whenever safety is an issue. You cannot allow unsafe behavior to occur in the school or classroom so you may have to intervene immediately to stop the behavior. There may also be consequences that have been mandated, such as the one-year suspension for a weapon violation. These are non-negotiable.

I want you to also distinguish between logical imposed consequences and illogical imposed consequences. A logical consequence makes sense in light of what was done. The consequence is connected with the behavior. For example, if someone makes a mess, it would be logical to ask him or her to clean it up. If someone has difficulty in the cafeteria with taking food from other students, then it's illogical to take away after school activities. There is no connection.

So what does that look like in school? There are lots of rules in school. The more rules there are, the more creative ways that exist to break them. Students will be tempted to break rules, particularly if their needs are not being met in responsible ways. Breaking rules provides power and freedom to the rule breaker.

The traditional approach tells us that when someone breaks a rule, you must squash the behavior immediately to correct the rule breaker but also to set a precedent for the rest of the students that breaking rules is not permitted.

Coming down hard on the perpetrator definitely sends a message but it may not be the one you intend. Other students see the punishment being doled out and will make judgments about the fairness of the punishment or your level of compassion. If students don't understand and agree with the severity of your punishment, then you lose trust and consequently, influence.

Why Does a Person "Misbehave"?

As we know from Lesson 4, a person has five basic needs--survival, love & belonging, power, freedom and fun. Remember learning that all behavior is purposeful and it is a person's best

attempt to get something they want in that moment? If they knew a better way, they would choose it.

Therefore, in order to be the person who has influence, you want to remember you are attempting to get at the root and not just the fruit of the issue. Dealing swiftly with the behavior would represent concentrating on the fruit. You see something you don't like and move immediately to correct it without exploration of the underlying cause(s).

An example of this would be a child sleeping in your class. You can go immediately to the child, tell him students are not allowed to sleep in class and send him to the office for some kind of punishment. Instead, I'm suggesting you talk to the student to find out what is causing the behavior.

When a teacher at Derby High School did just that, she found that the student's mother had lost her job and so he was working the night shift 11 PM to 7 AM and then coming in to school. Naturally, he was exhausted after working all night. Instead of punishing the behavior, she took the time to learn the root and then spoke to the child about possible alternatives.

When people have responsible ways to get their needs met, they will not need to act out in a non-responsible way. When you see a behavior that's not in line with what you think should be happening, then you already know there is something that person is trying to get through his/her behavior. You want to understand what the person is attempting to get and then help him or her develop alternatives so they can get what they need in a more responsible way. That is true discipline.

Detractors of this method say, "But what about consequences? If they don't experience a negative result, then they won't learn." Bruce Lipton has already showed us how negative, painful results imposed by one person on another do not produce growth or learning. Pain is not a necessary component for learning, in fact, it will prevent it.

There is a very serious consequence. The consequence is the conversation you will have with the person who is engaging in the challenging behavior. The conversation says, "Hey, I care about you. I will spend the time it takes to help you figure this out. I know together we can do it and I want to help you get what you want without breaking the rules, the law or hurting anyone, including yourself."

Remember the Reality Therapy process from Section 2? This is not a painless process but you are not imposing it on another person. You are inviting the person to take a look at the behavior she is using to get what she wants and asking to evaluate whether or not she is likely to be successful. This, in and of itself, is the consequence of the "misbehavior." You are going to spend the time to help the student figure out a better way. You are holding her accountable and supporting her at the same time.

Balance between Support and Challenge

While creating that relationship of influence, it is important to maintain the proper balance of support and challenge. You want to be supportive of your students when they need someone on their side and you want to push them to their full potential. However, be careful when pushing, you are not pushing in the direction you want them to go instead of the direction they want to go. You don't want to accept excuses. You want to hold your students accountable for doing their best and mastering the material.

As you maintain this balance of support and challenge, you will be creating a relationship of strong influence. Your students will know you care about them and that you see them as competent and powerful people, capable of making responsible decisions for their own lives.

Summary: This week, I want you to complete the worksheet at the end of this lesson. It has several examples of consequences and you are asked to determine whether the examples qualify as a natural consequence or an imposed consequence. Then you are to differentiate even further with imposed consequences by deciding whether or not it is a logical or illogical imposed consequence. Most examples are school examples but there are a few parenting ones interspersed.

Next module, we will be looking at creating an environment that's conducive to learning. I'm definitely looking forward to it.

If you have any questions about anything in this lesson or previous ones, please ask me. You may want to know if your answers on the worksheet are the same as mine. You are entitled to one email each week. I want to help you any way I possibly can.

Consequences

Read each scenario and then decide whether the situation is an example of natural consequences (NC), imposed logical consequences (ILC), or imposed non-logical consequences (INC). Place the proper abbreviation in the blank after each example.

A student cut a class and was not allowed to participate in the school play three days later. _____

A group of students was having a food fight in the cafeteria so now they have to eat lunch in the detention room until they can develop a plan for not throwing food. _____

A girl is a bully and no one likes her. _____

A child was discovered sticking gum to the bottom side of his desk. His consequence was removing the gum he had put there. _____

A boy got in trouble in chemistry for mixing chemicals that created a minor reaction. He was suspended from all after school activities for two weeks. _____

A five year-old refuses to listen to her teacher and goes outside without a coat on. She gets very cold. _____

A teenager has a minor accident with the car used in driver's education. Because there had not been any previous accidents, the "accident forgiveness" clause kicked in and there was no increase in rates and all damage was covered. _____

Child gets bad grades in school and is grounded by his parents until the next marking period.

Child has a pass to use the bathroom during class but didn't follow the agreed upon parameters. He went to the room where his girlfriend had class. He does not receive any punishment but the teacher assigns a teacher's aide to accompany him anytime he leaves class until he demonstrates he can be trusted again. _____

Exploring preschooler doesn't follow the rule of not climbing on the back of the furniture. He loses his balance, falls off the back of the chair and breaks his arm. _____

Teenage boy in a residential program gets in trouble for fighting in school. The principal decides he can no longer play football on the high school team. _____

Teenage girl is not following the house rule of getting her dirty clothes in the laundry room for laundry day. She is told she will have to wash, dry and fold her own laundry. _____