

Information sheet 2: Explaining the difference between ‘discipline’ and ‘punishment’

Creating a positive classroom atmosphere has a lot to do with how you as the teacher manage behaviour. Focusing on ‘discipline’ rather than ‘punishment’ is a good strategy.

See below for a table that compares and contrasts the two concepts.

Punishment *focuses on the misbehaviour* and may do little or nothing to help a learner behave better in the future

The teacher who punishes the learner teaches the learner that the adult, rather than the learner, is responsible for the way the learner behaves.

The learner learns that the teacher is superior, and the use of force –verbal, physical, or emotional –is acceptable, especially over younger, weaker persons.

Punishment has a negative effect on learners, such as:

instead of teaching the learner self-discipline, or inner control, punishment causes the learner to feel shame, guilt, anxiety, angry, resentful, and fearful

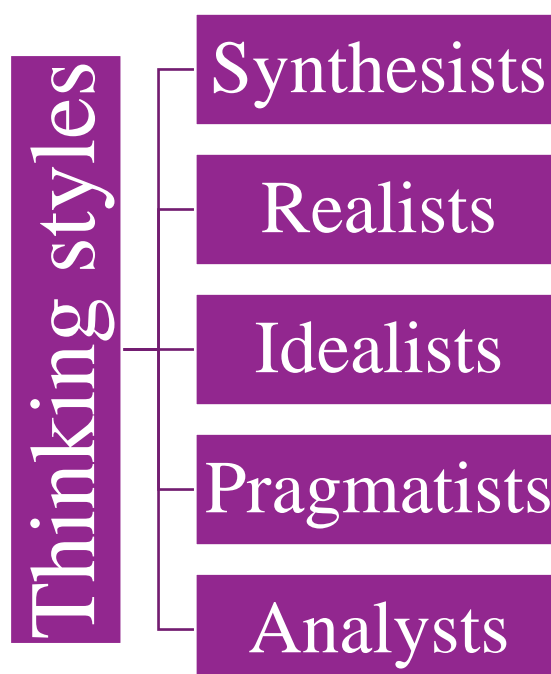
Contrasting discipline and punishment

| Discipline is: | Punishment is: |
|---|--|
| Giving learners positive alternatives | Being told only what NOT to do |
| Acknowledging or rewarding efforts and good behaviour | Negative and disrespectful of the learner |
| Learners follow rules because they are discussed and agreed on | Forcing learners to comply with illogical rules “just because you said so” |
| Consistent, firm guidance | Constantly reprimanding learners for minor infractions causing them to tune us out (ignore us; not listen to us) |
| Positive; respectful of the child | Controlling, shaming, ridiculing |
| Physically and verbally non-violent | Physically and verbally violent and Aggressive |
| Logical consequences that are directly related to the misbehaviour | Reacting harshly to misbehaviour |

| | |
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| Learners must make amends when their behaviour negatively affects someone else | When children are punished for hurting others rather than being shown how to make amends |
| Understanding individual abilities, needs, circumstances, and developmental stages | Inappropriate for the child's developmental stage of life; individual circumstances, abilities and needs are not taken into consideration |
| Teaching learners to internalise self-discipline | Teaching children to behave well only when they risk getting caught doing otherwise |
| Listening and modelling | When learners follow rules because they are threatened or bribed |
| Using mistakes as learning opportunities | Consequences that are unrelated and illogical to the misbehaviour |
| Directed at the behaviour, never the learner: "Your behaviour was wrong" | Criticising the learner rather than the learner's behaviour: "You are very stupid; you were wrong" |

ANPPCAN Kenya Chapter (January 2005)

Robert Bramson (1994) described and categorised thinking styles. See the five thinking styles as described:



These thinking styles are explained in the table below:

Synthesist thinking style

Creative thinkers look at opposites

Can see two opposing sides to every issue

Realist thinking style

Fast moving; rely on what they can see, hear, touch, taste and smell.

Like to gather information and devise a practical solution with the available resources.

Idealist thinking style

Believe in high standards and the ideal.

They think about the correct thing to do. May be annoyed by resource constraints.

Pragmatist thinking style

Flexible; have ideas; are quite practical and resourceful.

A pragmatist wants to find a quick solution rather than 'solve the world's problems'.

Analyst thinking style

Like to use data, organise and analyse it; approach the issue methodically, to devise a solution based on information.

Rely on logic and on calculating the correct solution. Interested in accuracy, detail and being thorough.

Note: The theories on thinking styles described above represent a ways of describing our thinking preferences. The idea is to be more aware of preferences and more tolerant of those who think differently from us, and then to accommodate the differences in our facilitation.

Note: How you can plan to take account of the differing thinking and learning styles, to maximise class participation, interest, enjoyment and learning?¹

Think about:

- How you will organise groups;
- What roles you will assign to learners;
- How you could vary activities over time;
- What methodology you would select and why;
- The information you could provide for tasks;
- How you will debrief the activity and the way the group carried it out.

The question you need to ask yourself is:

“How am I planning and assigning activities that allow for the variety of thinking styles and allow learners to play to their strengths?”

¹ Developed by Intelesi for Educor, but adapted for this programme.