**Discipline Lessons from a Speeding Ticket**

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People attending our events have requested more practical information on discipline, and we know all dads (and moms) will benefit from the practical ideas presented by Dr. Bob Barnes. He teaches that children learn best from experiencing the natural consequences of their actions, and it's pointless for parents to get caught up in power struggles with their kids.

One of Barnes' insights that parents probably can't hear enough is, *Don't make yourself part of the consequence*. When our children disobey or make poor decisions and we yell, criticize and ridicule them, our words-and the harsh tone that comes with them-become a more severe consequence for them than the results of their bad behavior.

What's more, when we yell or criticize, our children are often made to feel worthless, lines of communication can be broken, and we often distract them from thinking about what they have done wrong. There is a better way.

Though it may seem contrary to what seems natural, we should handle behavior issues in an *objective or dispassionate way*. A great example of this is a police officer. When he pulls you over for a ticket, he doesn't say, "What were you thinking?! What could possibly make you decide it's okay to drive 53 when the speed limit is 35? I can't believe I have to deal with you today!" Instead, he relies on the plan that's already in place to do the teaching-the natural consequences of the law. He simply hands you a bill for $125 and says, very respectfully, "Have a nice day."

As you drive away, you're probably more worried about how fast you're driving than whether the officer is angry at you; you may even feel like he's genuinely concerned for your well being.

The officer's approach is a great model for us as we deal with our children. We should always make it clear that we love them and we're pulling for their success, even while we're enforcing difficult consequences. Of course, in order for this to work we must have a plan in place that brings negative consequences to our children for their poor choices. It's a challenge, but part of that plan should be to always train our children in an atmosphere of love and hope, not anger or criticism.

Discover more of Barnes' discipline tips in his audio CD set, ***The Balance of Love and Discipline***.

Also, read a related example applied to teenagers: the ["Good Neighbor" approach](http://www.fathers.com/content/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=435&Itemid=62).

**ACTION POINTS**

* Create a plan with your children's mother that provides appropriate consequences for their common behavior issues.
* Communicate the expectations and consequences clearly to your children during a time when you aren't dealing with a behavior issue.
* When your child does need correction, show empathy, not anger. Practice phrases like, "That's too bad," or, "I'm sorry you decided to do that."
* Tell your children often, "Sometimes you make poor choices, but I'll always love you. Nothing will ever change that."
* If you have yelled at your children recently, be willing to admit your mistakes: "I'm sorry. I was rude and disrespectful, and that was unfair to you. Will you forgive me?" That's a great way to build better connections with our children, especially our teens.