

THE TRUTH ABOUT CONSEQUENCES AND THE TROUBLE WITH TIME-OUTS

Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D.

*Clinical & Developmental Psychologist
Vancouver, Canada*

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The Truth about Consequences
and the
Trouble with Time-Outs

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The case for consequences and time-outs:

- they are proven to work
- they are highly recommended by most experts
- they are better than the alternatives
- they don't require insight to put into practice
- they are trainable and transferable techniques
- everyone is doing it

about consequences and time-outs

- the practices flow from learning theory, the dominant paradigm influencing parenting practices in North America
- the primary premise of learning theory is that behaviour is a function of its consequences
- these methods appeal to those who think that experience is the most important factor in behaviour
- these methods flow from the idea that the primary objective in discipline is to teach the child a lesson.

The problem with consequences and time-outs from a scientific point of view:

The theory and the practices are completely uninformed by the three most important factors in the development of a child: attachment, maturation and vulnerability.

about attachment

- the preeminent need of a child is for proximity with the adults they are attached to
- the context for raising a child is the attachment of that child to the adults responsible
- the desire to be good is a fruit of attachment
- the skills for working with children are not transferable
- the capacity to attach fully and deeply needs to be developed
- being attached at the heart is necessary for ease of parenting and for healthy development

about vulnerability

- children are easily wounded and can become defended against a sense of vulnerability
- attachment wounds, and in particular, facing separation, are the hardest experiences to bear
- children need soft hearts (ie, to be easily moved) to become fully and securely attached

about maturation

- each child is born with the potential to become fully human but the realization of this potential is not inevitable
- emotion is the main player in maturation, not behaviour
- children need soft hearts (ie, be easily moved) for true maturation to occur
- maturation, not learning or discipline, is what changes a child from inside out
- immaturity, not the lack of learning one's lessons, is the most likely explanation for problem behaviour

The truth about children:

To make sense of children and their behaviour, we must view them as emotional beings, not instrumental or rational beings.

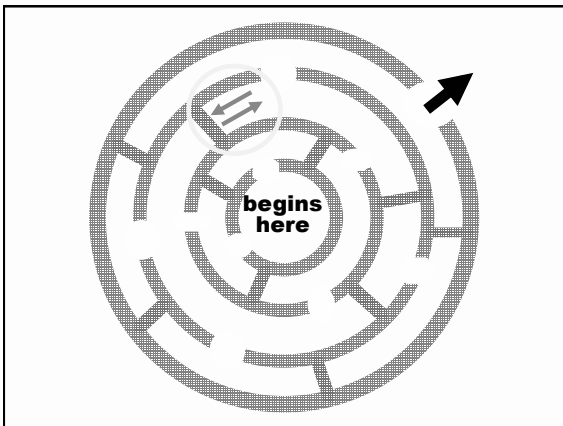
- the limbic system is involved in all aspects of human development, including the brain
- most problem behaviour is rooted in emotion and instinct, and not done on purpose as learning theory presumes
- consequences work when they do, not so much because they teach lessons, but rather because they change emotions (explains why the changes are usually short-lived)
- consequences fail to work when they intensify the emotion that results in the problem behaviour

The truth about consequences from a developmental point of view:

Consequences are essentially encounters with futility, meant to change the child through the process of adaptation.

- adaptation leads to deep and lasting change
- adaptation is an emotional process, not a rational one
- adaptation involves feelings of futility, including sadness and disappointment





About encounters with futility:

1. The futility must register emotionally for deep and lasting change to occur.
2. If the child is NOT moved to sadness, aggression is a more likely result.
3. Encounters with futility are often hard to bear and can lead to defenses against the vulnerability involved.

Some truths about the practice of consequences:

1. The practice typically involves using what a child cares about against him or her.
2. The practice tends to blind us to the ANTECEDENTS and bind us to the INCIDENTS.
3. The practice serves important functions in social settings.

about the practice of consequences

1. The practice typically involves using what a child cares about against him or her.

- a) *interferes with healthy moral development*
- b) *undermines healthy attachment*
 - insults the relationship if one exists
 - renders dependency an aversive state
 - renders the adult an adversary
 - harms the development of attachment

about the practice of consequences

1. The practice typically involves using what a child cares about against him or her.

- a) *interferes with healthy moral development*
- b) *undermines healthy attachment*
- c) *conveys a lack of trust in a child's desire to be good for us*
- d) *reveals our lack of confidence in our own natural attachment power and authority*
- e) *can trigger emotional desensitization and defensive detachment in a child*

about the practice of consequences

2. The practice tends to blind us to the ANTECEDENTS and to bind us to the INCIDENTS.

a) When we're thinking of 'what to do when...', we're not sensing the emotions that precede, nor are we cognizant of the circumstances that have affected the child.

b) Good practice demands 'immediacy', typically rendering the incident the exclusive venue of intervention.

- receptiveness and accessibility is usually diminished in the incident
- does not allow for reflection or for establishing the necessary context of connection required to make headway

about the practice of consequences

3. The practice serves important social functions.

a) reinforces the alpha position and posture

b) satisfies demands for social justice

c) conveys an attempt to protect those who have been violated

d) keeps others from seeking revenge and meting out their own punishments

e) underscores societal values and institutional rules

about the practice of consequences

1. The practice typically involves using what a child cares about against him or her.

2. The practice tends to blind us to the ANTECEDENTS and bind us to the INCIDENTS.

3. The practice serves important functions in social settings.

In social settings, the social functions must be balanced against the concerns for the impact on the child and on the attachment relationship.

The truth about consequences: a review

1. Life is full of consequences and we would be remiss as adults to protect our children from them.
2. Becoming preoccupied with consequences blinds us to the child and to more creative interventions.
3. Consequences can do more harm than good if failing to result in sadness and disappointment.
4. Consequences work best for children who need them the least and they work least for children who need them the most.
5. The practice of consequences can harm relationships and interfere with the development of healthy attachment.
6. The practice of consequences attempts to make the child responsible for his or her own immaturity – a responsibility that belongs to the adult in charge.

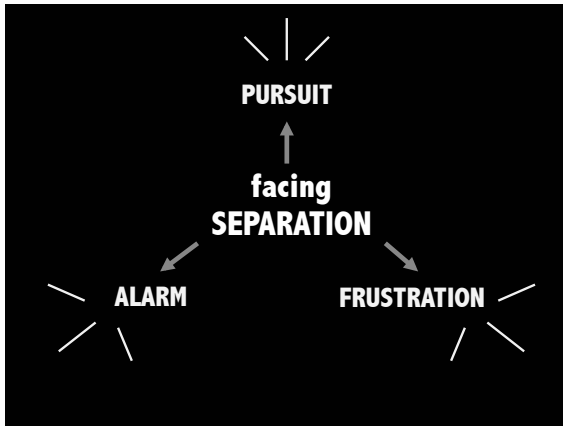
The Trouble with Time-Outs

... where time-out involves separation (physically or emotionally) from those attached to

The trouble with time-outs:

The experience of the child is essentially one of separation from the parents, and as such, can affect the child deeply and profoundly.

- applies to all separation-based discipline including ignoring, silent treatment, threat of leaving, feigning leaving, love withdrawal, cold shoulder, ultimatums or warnings of separation, shunning, etc.

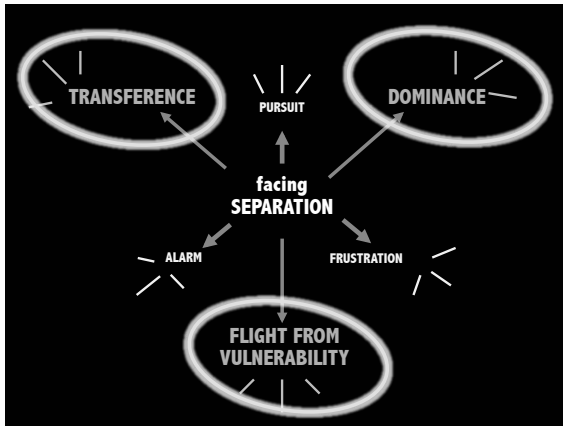


The impact of facing separation

1. Elevated 'pursuit' and 'alarm'
 - explains why time-outs work when they do
 - creates an underlying sense of insecurity
 - undermines 'venturing forth' energy such as curiosity and individuation

The impact of facing separation

1. Results in elevated 'pursuit' and 'alarm'.
2. The increased frustration typically erupts after proximity is restored and feelings of alarm abate.
3. Can evoke alpha instincts in defense.



The impact of facing separation

1. Results in elevated 'pursuit' and 'alarm'.
2. The increased frustration typically erupts after proximity is restored and feelings of alarm abate.
3. Can evoke alpha instincts in defense.
4. Can lead to attachment voids which in turn can become filled with competing attachments.
5. Can lead to a sense of vulnerability too much to bear, resulting in defenses against that vulnerability.
6. The resulting defendedness impedes the development of attachment and thus the context required to raise the child.

We have taken a wrong turn:

- from the heart to the head
- from matters of relationship & emotion to a preoccupation with behaviour & consequences
- from 'raising a child' to 'teaching a lesson'
- from 'imposing order' to 'teaching a lesson'
- from antecedents to consequences
- from the wisdom of tears to logical consequences
- from spankings to time-outs

What are safe alternatives?

Twelve Guidelines for Safe Discipline

A. FIVE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES of attachment-safe and developmentally friendly discipline.

B. FOUR DISCIPLINES to compensate for a child's immaturity.

C. THREE PRACTICES to help a child to grow up.

Twelve Guidelines for Safe Discipline

A. FIVE foundational principles of attachment-safe and developmentally-friendly discipline.

1. Nurture and safeguard the child's desire to be good for you.
2. Collect before you direct.

*Collect
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1. Nurture and safeguard the child's desire to be good for you.
2. Collect before you direct.
3. Bridge what could divide.
4. Know the limits of your natural power and authority.
5. Don't try to make headway in the incident.

Guidelines for Handling Incidents *

***Instead of trying to make headway,
aim to do no harm.***

1. Address the violation simply (if necessary).
2. Bridge the problem behaviour.
3. Attempt to change or control the situation (NOT the child).
4. Set a date to debrief or address the problem.
5. Exit sooner than later.

** where emotion is involved*

Twelve Guidelines for Safe Discipline

B. FOUR disciplines to compensate for a child's immaturity.

1. Assume responsibility for the immature child.
2. Change the circumstances or the feelings that result in the troubling behaviour.
3. Employ structure and ritual to get the desired results.
4. Script the desired behaviour.

Twelve Guidelines for Safe Discipline

C. THREE practices that help a child to grow up.

1. Help the child form good intentions.
2. Help the child find the tempering elements to answer the troubling impulses.
3. Help the child find his or her sadness when up against futility.

oops!

Is it too late to change?

Won't my child feel confused if I change?

What do I do with my guilt?

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FURTHER STUDY AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES IN NEUFELD'S APPROACH

Various study and support opportunities exist for those who are interested in pursuing this attachment-based developmental approach to working with children. In addition, individuals may pursue authorization as facilitators of Neufeld's video-courses, presenters of his courses, or practitioners of this approach as therapists, school-based consultants or parent consultants. Consult the website – GordonNeufeld.com – for more detailed information.

Neufeld Intensives I and II

For those who want a thorough grounding in this approach, these courses provide the necessary foundations. They are offered on site at least once a year in Vancouver, Canada and often in other locations as well, including overseas. These Intensives are also offered through Distance Education, with graduate credit available through Vancouver Island University for an additional fee. The Level I is called *Making Sense of Kids* and is the foundational and prerequisite course for all authorization programs. The focus of this Level Two Intensive is the challenging problems of childhood and youth: aggression, resistance, oppositionality, anxiety, dominance problems, bullying, compulsiveness, attachment problems, separation problems and much more. The objective is to make sense of these problems and from this foundation of insight, to outline strategies for treatment and intervention.

Courses available through Distance Education for individuals and groups

A number of distance education courses are available in English and some in French as well. The offerings include:

- *Power to Teach* (4 hours DVD material)
- *Bullies: their making and unmaking* (4 hours DVD material)
- *Making Sense of Adolescence* (8 hours DVD material)
- *The Teachability Factor* (9 hours DVD material)
- *Neufeld Intensive I* (22 hours DVD material)
- *Neufeld Intensive II* (20 hours DVD material)

All distance education courses feature study guides and online support from Neufeld faculty who have trained with Dr. Neufeld through an internship program. Groups of six or more participants are provided with tailored support (onsite or online). Members of such groups are able to study the course material on their own and then receive support in a group format from a Neufeld faculty member during onsite sessions or through online video-conferencing.

Directed Study offerings for those who want equipping and support

Individualized programs of either one or two years duration are available to those who have completed a Neufeld Intensive and are seeking ... ***authorization • support • mentoring • assistance ... in ... studying • practicing • implementing • researching • furthering ...*** Neufeld's approach. These individualized programs typically involve several hours per week on average and include working with faculty advisors who have successfully completed a two-year internship with Dr. Neufeld. These programs include further studies using material available on the Neufeld Virtual Campus as well as practicum experiences or case consultation as appropriate. Individuals seeking authorization can do so in one or more of the following five categories and categories:

- *Facilitation of Neufeld videocourses or distance education courses*
- *Parent consulting using Neufeld's approach*
- *School-based consulting using Neufeld's approach*
- *Presenting or teaching Neufeld's approach*
- *Direct treatment using Neufeld's approach (ie, as a therapist, counselor, pediatrician, psychiatrist, etc)*

Neufeld Virtual Campus

The distance education courses and direct study offerings are housed and facilitated through a virtual campus. This campus is also home to all those who have completed a Neufeld Intensive and who are seeking connection and support in their efforts to integrate and further this approach. Site membership brings access to discussion forums as well as to additional resources, study materials and online seminars. A special Educators Centre is also housed on campus for those interested in forwarding this paradigm in the school setting. The campus also has satellite campuses in French, Spanish, Hebrew and German, bringing a global flavour to the experience.

For more information, consult www.GordonNeufeld.com