



DISCIPLINE IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS

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When I think of the eerie concept of discipline, I am reminded of the albino Silas in Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. As his way of atoning for his mistakes and perceived sins, Silas takes a "heavy knotted rope" called *The Discipline* and uses it to whip himself over and over again. This is the manner by which he purges himself of his day's sins, through self-flagellation. One cannot help but wince at this manner of self-punishment.

Those who have had to kneel down on the floor scattered with scattered mung beans or salt, and then weighed down by books on outstretched arms and on the head know how discipline can truly hurt. I have never been subjected to such kind of discipline, thank God. However, when my own kids get to be a bit too much for me, I sometimes contemplate on doing this kind of punishment to them. Fortunately for my kids, I have never seriously acted on those musings. There's just something about today's generation that makes you wish you could do more. But don't get me wrong—I love my children to bits. It's just that they can get a bit too... undisciplined at times.

Maybe, parents can have the option of military discipline, the kind that teaches soldiers to be more afraid of their superiors than their enemy. Perhaps, we could also shave our kids' heads when they fail to toe the line, or have them clean the floor with their toothbrushes, or have them do push-ups. Is there anybody out there who already does those to their children? I don't think so.

Our work organizations have specific systems of discipline which they enforce. Disciplinary action is taken when a certain company policy is violated. This can range from verbal reprimand to a written memo and on to suspension or termination. Memos are good, since they remind the employee when he steps out of bounds, and thereby invites him to explain himself. Suspensions are a real pain, but more so are terminations. The workplace should always be a venue of justifiable discipline in whatever form it may take. As long as there is a clear policy of how the investigation of the infraction undergoes due process, there shouldn't be any real problem.

The church also has its own policies of discipline, the most common of which is excommunication (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discipline>). In the Philippines, as early as the Spanish era, excommunication was already practiced. Nowadays, it still is basically implemented through the spiritual condemnation of the erring individual. Wow! You get banished from the spiritual community, technically.

No matter what form discipline takes, the essence is still the same. Those who get disciplined are reminded of their obligation to stay true to the set standards of the organization they belong to. That's right, children included.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do you think of the way today's society enforces discipline? Use your own society as an example.
2. Why is it important for children to be taught about discipline while they are young?
3. What are the dangers of not disciplining children properly? Be as specific as you want.
4. Share your thoughts on the concept of disciplining children by taking a less punishing approach, i.e., sitting down with them to talk. What are its advantages and disadvantages?
5. In your own family, how is parental authority asserted?