

IDEAS 97

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 97th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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WHEN WORDS FALL SHORT AND ACTIONS DO THE JOB

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

During my earliest days as a young mother and parent, I was often challenged by one thing: doing as I said. My children had opportunity after opportunity to do what they want, and it was upon me to curb their young impulses with my own brand of discipline. Sometimes, at the risk of creating future dysfunctional children, I fell prey to the temptation of screaming my head off and blabbering like mad just to get my message across. During those times, I did nothing else but reduce myself to helpless tears and hair tearing. Yet, my children seemed not to get my message or even to begin to understand what had created the monster in me. Those immature, distressing and depressing moments were in my younger years as a mother. Fortunately now, many eons (yes, I feel it's been that already) and many episodes and seasons hence, and millions of parenting advice and readings later, I have mastered the art of doing as I say to my children. Well, at least to a certain degree.

Now, when I say no I most definitely mean NO! with capital letters and an exclamation point, yes. Back then, it was easier to threaten my kids with grounding or bodily harm. But the groundings grew to be a test of wills for both me and my child who suffered from it. I ultimately shortened the grounding period when I had seen how glum and heavily sighing my grounded child appeared. Bodily harm hasn't been and will never be effective deterrents to children making infractions. In fact, the threat of bodily harm will only open avenues of hostility and ill will between us and our children. Tiger mom or not, I will now always think twice, take a step back and heave a deep breath before I lay a hand on any one of my children. They say that when you spare the rod, you spoil the child. The language of yesteryears has taken a paradigm shift, however. That shift has leaned toward interactive and more child-centered discipline, where the child's interests become more important considerations than the message of discipline itself.

Classroom teachers in my time were allowed to use pointer sticks to whip hardheaded children into submission, or to use mung beans or salt as kneelers for hard-to-discipline students. Nowadays, corporal punishment is heavily disapproved, frowned upon, and could be a cause of termination from the teaching force. Somehow, teachers have a Damoclean paradox before them: they're damned if they don't teach values and discipline in the classroom, but they're even more damned if their methods are perceived cruel and tyrannical in any way.

I miss my late father precisely because he had taught me that words are a far cry from actions when it comes to teaching children. But cogito ergo sum, and I exist to do the thinking.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it difficult for a parent to carry out punishment for their child?
2. Should the fear of reprisal or condemnation deter a parent from dispensing discipline to their child? Why or why not?
3. How can a young child be shown that a parent means what they say? What about a teenager?
4. How has the duty of teachers to teach discipline in the classroom been affected by anti-child abuse laws?
5. Would you adapt a more westernized approach to discipline? How?



WORDS STOP WHERE ACTIONS BEGIN

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

The ability to take action and not waste effort on mere grandstanding and oratorical prowess is something we need today. In fact, that is something the whole world needs now. People who are willing to walk the talk seem to be few and far between, simply because we have become too ensconced in our personal comfort zones to even lift a finger and spring into action. Actions speak louder than words, and no amount of rhetoric can ever match the power of solid action. In my line of work, it is tempting and easy to come out with words that persuade and those that inspire. However, unless I myself am willing to invest more into making those words stick, all that I have ever done will ultimately amount to nothing at all. Believe me when I say that the path I have chosen is never a smooth one. In fact, I have often found out that saying something is very different from actually doing it.

In our day-to-day existence, we are all faced with tests on how sincere we are to the words we issue or the things we declare that we adhere to. We can control our words. But our actions are more controlled by the conviction to act on those words. Unless we put conviction behind the words that we utter, there can never be genuineness, sincerity and honesty in them. We need to say what we feel at certain times, but we must place a guard over our own mouths that we do not say things we are not quite ready to stand for. Some things are also easier said than done, so to make a pledge or a promise in a halfhearted manner does not make one a better person. In fact, such people do not deserve the time of day to be listened to, much less heard.

We all need to face the consequences of our words, much like we need to face the consequences of our actions. Words and actions must work together to make us what we are. Our personalities are perceived by the very words we say, and our personalities get clearer definition by the very actions we take. We can never testify to being perfect, but we can do our utmost to make our actions speak for our own selves. The journey to achieving self-perfection is never an easy one to take, but we can all strive to make that journey wonderful, enriching and eventually fulfilling as long as we are focused on the goal and consistent in even the tiniest actions. The journey is not the goal, but that does not mean that we shouldn't enjoy that trip and make it exclusively ours.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Actions speak louder than words. Explain this saying.
2. Why is it a problem for many people to mean what they say?
3. How good are you at acting on what you say? Cite specific examples, as needed.
4. How do you simplify complex actions? Is there a formula, perhaps?
5. Why do people with a lot of hot air and no substance at all turn others off? In what way?



TO BE OR NOT TO BE...

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

You are called an activist when you go out on the streets and proclaim to the world what your convictions are.

You are branded either a “leftist” or a “rightist”, depending on where you lean towards for a certain set of principles, or when you find yourself associated with ‘less orthodox’ views. You are termed a “centrist” when you are moderate about your views, most specifically your political ones. But an activist you definitely are when you join many others to declare your inclinations, whether political, religious or what have you. The important thing here is that you willingly stand side-by-side with many others just to get yourself heard.

When I was in the Sixth Grade and the K to 12 program had not yet been put into law (Okay, okay, that was several decades ago so you can now stop snickering!), I took a test along with several in my graduating class for possible entry into a Science high school in the big city. One of the come-ons for that opportunity was that once graduated from the Science high school, a student could automatically get into the country’s premier state university. Fortunately, majority of us who took the exam passed, and those who did were instructed to go to the big city for the final interview and deliberation. All of us who passed never underwent the final interview and the deliberation process. Our parents were all in unison: we were too young to contemplate being on our own that early. My parents had another concern: that students from the state university ultimately became activists, who took to the streets with the drop of a hat to express their anti-government stance and opinions. This goes to show how parents can be protective of their children, sometimes overly so.

On a more positive light, many of those who did not follow through with the Science high school opportunity still eventually studied in the state university for their degrees. In fact, many of my classmates who did not even take the Science high school entrance exams still attended the premier state university to complete their degrees. I guess all’s well that ends well. I, on the other hand, went to a Catholic university, but that’s another story.

Now, I wonder what would have happened if I had acted on that interview process and gone into the Science high school. Would taking a different set of actions back then have produced a different effect in my life? Of course it would. I would have blazed a different path and completely seen a different perspective. Sometimes, the actions we take find justification in where we end up. That’s the beauty of taking action and the substance of acting.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. If you were the writer, would you have gone for that final step? Why or why not?
2. Can children take responsibility for their actions? What, to you, is the age of discernment?
3. How can we teach children about accountability for whatever actions they take? Use specific examples, if needed.
4. Why is it essential for parents to lead by example?
5. Do you remember how old you were when you became more aware of the consequences of your actions? Talk about that period of your life.



YOUR WORDS BELIE YOUR ACTION

Marian Baltazar
Class of 1980, University of the Philippines College of Manila
AB Political Science

There have been a lot of times when your words belie your action. We say a lot of things that we really don't mean. We go through a lot of actions that doesn't go with what comes out of our mouth. We therefore have some or several actions that do not really match the words that we say. Even when we know pretty well that our spoken words are one of the most powerful means of communication.

There has always been a time or some ways when a person's actions fail to match his words. Yes, we often hear people say one thing but their words belie their action. In our spiritual life, this can even hold true. We can hear sermons from pastors, deacons and preachers but in some time or the other, they do not really "walk what they talk". This can mean hypocrisy which is offensive to God. A person can hide their deception from their fellow men but will inevitably fail to hide it from God.

This is what you call deception, when people's words do not jive their actions. It is clearly deceiving the people around you and who you talk to. Well I guess if our actions do not really support our words, then it would be better not to speak at all. What is inside the heart comes out of his mouth and what comes out of the heart of a man determines what kind of a man he is. So when he acts differently and does not really show what he meant with what he said, then it he is deceiving everyone.

How many times have we deceived people through our actions? Until when are we going to lie as we go through our daily life and not really mean what we say? As we continue to let others believe what we are not, we also continue to deceive them. I do not think this will do us any good since I firmly believe that it pays to be honest. Definitely, I wouldn't want to be branded as a hypocrite, trying to hide the real you inside for they it is not what they that they really get to know.

We can always fool other people by making them believe with the words that come out of our mouth. Neither can we fool ourselves with what we say but it doesn't show in our actions. For no matter how hard we try to speak what we are not, it will eventually show in our actions. We cannot put on a façade for the rest of our life and we can never deceive others all the time. As the saying goes, " Watch your thoughts, for they become words; Watch your words because they become actions ; Watch your actions, for they become habits; Watch your habits, for they become character; Watch you character, for it becomes your destiny."

We should make it a habit to speak from the heart and not to speak of who we are not. At the end of the day, when your words always belie your action, no one will ever believe what you say, then and only then will you realize that you have lost your integrity.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you always show in your actions whatever you say? How?
2. Would you like to be called a hypocrite rather than an honest person? Why not?
3. Do you believe in the saying, "Action speaks louder than words?" Explain your answer.
4. Do your actions always fail to express what you truly feel? Why or why not?
5. Give examples of instances in your life when your words belied your action.





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