

## A Sermon on Approaches to Discipline

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for September 20th, 2020 (and beyond)

First, Oxford Languages via Google defines "Discipline" as "a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education." and originates from the Latin "Disciplina" which means "instruction/knowledge". The same source defines "Instruction" as "teaching; education." and while additional definitions are used and available, the above are primarily how I think about discipline and how I employ it. So, when there are teachable moments among friends, colleagues, neighbors, employers, employees, fellow citizens, and family, approach can make all the difference. Below are example scenarios highlighting a variety of approaches so you can get an idea of what approach you prefer as both a giver and receiver depending on situation.

### Scenario #1

Giver is legal guardian of receiver who is the dependent. In this situation, the giver is the "parent" and the receiver is the "child". The receiver has been truant and the giver has been notified.

#### Initial Response By Giver to Receiver Would Best Be Received In What Style?

Giver Style 1: No excuses. You've been skipping school and since I'm unfamiliar with disciplining or setting limits for you, I'm going to send you to an inescapable "school" that may not even be accredited, but, where you can't leave. (Self-righteous, judgmental, likely somewhat hypocritical, and excessively punitive.)

Giver Style 2: I understand you've been truant. Do you care to explain yourself? (Reasonable. Observant. Open to at least considering full context. So, fair.)

#### Initial Response By Receiver to Respective Giver Style Responses Above Would Best Be Received In What Style?

Receiver Style 1 Response 1: I'll run away and you'll never see me again. (This is someone who desperately feels neglected and is hoping said threat will result in a retraction of the threat to be sent away. In a manner, responding in kind while seeking validation and acceptance.)

Receiver Style 1 Response 2: You better get a court order because I'm not going without one and will sue or press charges. (This one knows some legal precedents on that matter and is right. And, listened because didn't offer any excuse, just a counter-threat that is actually a legitimate potential consequence of Giver following through on their threat.)

Receiver Style 1 Response 3: I'm sorry, I'll never do it again. Please don't send me away. (Co-dependent and Giver is likely a narcissist if that was sincere and not said sarcastically.)

Receiver Style 2 Response 1: I don't want to talk about it and it is none of your business. (This is someone who feels ready for independence though doesn't recognize at law they are still age of minority and their legal guardians are legally responsible for them thereby making it the business of the legal guardian. So, given the opportunity to present their side so the legal guardian can make a fully informed disciplinary decision and refusing that results in Style 2 feeling more like Style 1 but still staying Style 2.)

Receiver Style 2 Response 2: I had a nosebleed two days in a row and it happened when I didn't feel or notice it which is why my shirts and pants are stained from those days. We were out of laundry detergent and I didn't have any clean clothes for school. I didn't feel comfortable wearing unwashed clothes because the second day I had a nosebleed everyone made fun of the stains because they said it was like I had no clean clothes. So, I wrote laundry detergent on the shopping list on the refrigerator and put a star so you'd know it was urgent. And, I really didn't want to talk about being bullied or embarrassed. I was hoping no one would notice I was absent and when the shopping was done Saturday I could do laundry and return to school on Monday which I thought was best under the circumstances. (This is an honest kid who doesn't deserve to be spoken to in Style 1 ever and anyone who would respond to such a kid with Style 1 is a malignant narcissist.)

Now, what both Giver Styles 1 & 2 should add is the following: "Were you aware that parents/legal guardians can actually go to jail if their kids are truant or skipping school and that one mother actually died in jail in PA after inability to pay fines for her children's truancy/skipping school? Source: <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2016/jul/6/pennsylvania-woman-dies-jail-while-serving-sentence-truancy-fines-and-court-costs/> . I can't imagine that you intended to put my freedom and very life at risk by skipping school, but, please commit to never being truant again for both our sakes. I'd hate to see us both end up in the system. Me in jail and you in foster care. Given your age, you'd likely end up in a segregated congregate care facility. I don't want that future for either of us, do you? Work with me."

And, following Receiver Style 2 Response 2 "I understand, next time speak up and we'll get laundry detergent by making a special trip to the store. The stores are open every day, not just Saturday. And, it isn't any trouble to pick up something necessary on a non-shopping day. Did you at least use a stain stick or was that all used up too? Don't cry over it. We're both okay and no one has been fined and no one is going to jail. The school just notified me without issuing a penalty this time. Like a warning. So, it's okay and even if you didn't use the stain stick, likely we can still salvage your wardrobe or make you presentable for school Monday. Definitely."

## Scenario #2

Now, we have Giver as activist and Receiver as classmate and the Giver is seeking to convert Receiver to veganism.

Giver Style 1: You are a murderer and evil. Repent and stop killing animals! Anyone who participates through commerce or production will be penalized, ostracized, scorned, and ridiculed! You are criminal!

Giver Style 2: I'm vegan now and I don't eat at the cafeteria but require special accommodations for my special diet. It makes me sick to watch others eat animal products, so, I need my own little table but don't wish to eat alone. Will you go vegan too and sit with me?

Receiver Style 1 Response 1: It is perfectly legal to consume animal products. I can walk down to the grocery store right now and buy milk and steaks right in front of a police officer. So, your first statement is factually false as a matter of law. I have killed insects by accident and at times on purpose, but, I don't know how you would know that and don't believe you are innocent of doing so yourself. Can I ask what you do when your dog or cat gets fleas? Do you have companion animals? Have they ever had a bad case of it where the natural remedies like silica and yeast sprays weren't enough? Have you ever used insecticide to kill lice on yourself or fleas on your companion animal? Do you eat vegetables? Did you know vegetables eat meat and that's where the vegetables get their nutrients? I'm definitively not a criminal and that includes your allegations otherwise.

Receiver Style 1 Response 2: #WhatCheneySaid (which means Go Fuck Yourself).

Receiver Style 1 Response 3: I'm not evil. I don't kill animals. I love animals. How can I help? (Co-dependent response or someone with a rescuer complex.)

Receiver Style 2 Response 1: That's cool. Good luck finding a lunch buddy. I'm anemic and really can't join you.

Receiver Style 2 Response 2: Do you have allergies or is this a religious thing? Is it like being Halal or Kosher? Are you even allowed to eat with the opposite sex? You sound kind of misanthropic. Did you know 99.5% of the country consumes animal products? You basically just said 99.5% of the country makes you sick. Well, good luck finding that 1 in 200 lunch buddy. It's not me though, I'm part of the 199 out of 200 on that one.

Receiver Style 2 Response 3: Do I have to convert to your lifestyle in order for us to be friends or have lunch together? If so, I'm not interested and I fear if I eat around you it will make you sick. But, if you can stomach our differences, I'm willing to eat near you if at the same table would be too upsetting.

And, so that's different approaches to responding to discipline and/or disciplining in return. A good thing to remember is that those who fail to self-discipline often find others more than willing to help. Thank you.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <http://www.heal-online.org>