

Chapter 14 — Discipline and Punishment

of *Piloting Modern Youth: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Others Dealing with Adolescents*
(1931)

by William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.
with the collaboration of
Lena K. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.

© 2021 Matthew Block

Source for Chapter 14, in the order in which they appear

- (1) Frank Howard **Richardson**, A.B., M.D., *Parenthood and the Newer Psychology* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926)
- (2) Frederick **Tracy**, Ph.D., *The Psychology of Adolescence* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920)
- (3) Samuel S. **Drury**, *Fathers and Sons* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930)
- (4) George A. **Coe**, *What Ails Our Youth?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author (or previous Sadler book) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.

- (f) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (g) **Red** indicates an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about, in most cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting his source.

IX: THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY EVER ASSUMED—DISCIPLINING A CHILD (Richardson 124)

[contd] It would be hard indeed to find a subject that has caused parents as much anxious thought, depressing worry, and out and out discouragement,

as that of “discipline” (R 124).

If, among a gathering of distinguished men, one should be described as being particularly well-disciplined,

we should understand by this term that he was the one who had the best *control of himself*,—one whose inner self had all his faculties under the most perfect control.

If, on the other hand, we were to pick one child out from a group of children as being the best disciplined, what should we mean? We should mean that the child was the most quickly responsive to the *outside control* of some adult,—his parent or his teacher. In other words, by “well-disciplined,” we mean when speaking of a child just the opposite of what we mean when speaking of an adult.

XIV: DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

14:0.1 THE greatest and most difficult responsibility of parenthood,

especially in recent times,

is contained in the problem of discipline.

We often hear the thoughtless statement that this or that youth is well disciplined. I say thoughtless, because we usually make this remark when we observe a boy or girl implicitly obeying some parental mandate.

If we speak of an adult as being well disciplined,

we refer to his efficient inner self-control,

but with a child we appear to have in mind just the opposite—effective outside guidance—

immediate and unquestioning compliance with the demands of his parents and elders.

14:0.2 Now, if to be well disciplined means, in the case of the child, that he is willingly submissive to external direction, and if, in the case of the adult, it means true self-control,

Does the well-disciplined child naturally develop into the well-disciplined adult? If so, at what age, or at what stage of this development, does the absolute yielding to another's will that constitutes the state of "discipline" in the child, disappear;

then let me ask when and how and where is this change made?

How is the transition to be effected?

and how does the important matter of making decisions pass from the governing outsider, into the hands of the individual himself?

By what means shall we shift gears, and, during adolescence, teach this youth that discipline means inner or real self-control?

We must begin to make this change before the boys and girls leave the nursery; it will be too late if we wait for adolescence.

14:0.3 I think the greatest of all present-day mistakes in child culture is that we have been proceeding on

For it is decision-yielding that constitutes this conception of discipline in the *child*;

the theory that the proper way to raise a child is always to insist on decision-yielding.

Too many children have been brought up on the plan of implicit obedience—always, without question, to do as they are told.

During the first of life the training must largely be carried on in harmony this idea. Babies cannot be reasoned with; there must be or less arbitrary discipline in the nursery. But as fast as reason and judgment develop, they should be utilized, and thus the yielding program of early nursery days must be gradually evolved into

whereas it is *decision-making* that gives the *adult* the right to be called “well-disciplined” (R 125).

the *decision-making* attitude—the ideal of adult self-management.

14:0.4 The well-disciplined child who continues to be reared on the theory of decision-yielding

All of us can call to mind, in our own circles of acquaintances, just such model “well-disciplined” children of a larger growth, who have never grown up, in the real sense of the term. While adults in physical and mental development, such men and women have grown up, not into *self-reliant*, capable, “well-disciplined” *executives* at all;

cannot possibly develop into the strong, vigorous, *self-reliant*, and *well-disciplined adult*—

for these latter traits presuppose a strong and vigorous power of decision-making.

The child whose entire training has been dominated by this nursery system is foredoomed to become in adult life what he was in child life—

but instead are self-distrustful, subservient, timorous subordinates,

a docile, complacent, and yielding individual,

transferring their obedience toward their parents into a cringing *fear of* the business *superiors* under whom they happen to be placed (R 126).

always standing in *fear of* his intellectual, social, or economic *superiors*.

14:0.5 Our ideal in child culture should be to produce adults who are self-controlled, who can express their emotions and indulge their feelings, and yet remain civilized. We should bring into being citizens who can use the facilities of civilization without abusing them, but we stand in great danger of failing to secure this ideal type of citizen unless very early, even in nursery days, we begin to substitute decision-making for decision-yielding.

14:0.6 I feel that much of our insistence upon unreasoning obedience is but a thoughtless manifestation by

Is it really the ultimate good of the child that activates the parent here; or is it, in a subtle, well-disguised form, a glorification of the parent himself, as the commanding personality who gives orders, which are so unhesitatingly obeyed by an inferior, the child? We shall have occasion later on to discuss more intimately the quite unconscious “will-to-power” ... that is especially insidious in the way it has of besetting parents, teachers, and anyone else set in authority over children.

In such an individual, this “ego gratification” is not held in salutary check ... but is allowed to develop to a dangerous degree,

both parents and teachers of the inherent adult will-to-power.

There is much gratification of ego

in this ability to speak a word or clap the hands and see the child respond with almost automatic alertness.

that common parlance has seized upon and crystallized in its conventional view of the “bossy old maid school teacher!”

If we will do our best to be honest with ourselves,—not nearly the simple thing we have considered it in the past, now that we are coming to realize how hard our unconscious strives to keep us from just such honest searching of motives, by the process we know as rationalization,—we shall find that in many situations in which we thought we were acting entirely from the standpoint of the child and his good, we have really been actuated by an element of self-assertion that we should not have believed possible (R 129).

Many parents and teachers who are of but mediocre achievement, whose ambitions have been more or less thwarted, are able to indulge in at least some degree of ego satisfaction and enjoy authoritative function by commanding children and ordering the affairs of their young lives. We all like to give orders.

We like to be the big bosses.

Many parents and teachers may well ask themselves this question: Is my passion for discipline a real, sincere, and disinterested effort at child culture, or is it a masked form of self-gratification—ego indulgence?

14:0.7 Parents and teachers are equally gifted in rationalization.

It is easy to allow our innate self-assertion to enjoy a free hand in directing the children and dominating their young lives, while we soothe our better judgment with the rationalization that superiority of command is really good for the child, even indispensable to discipline.

Such an attitude has ancient and honorable authority behind it—even “Spare the rod and spoil the child.”

ADMINISTRATION OF PUNISHMENT

The next time your child flatly disobeys you ...

let your righteous wrath, or perfectly justifiable indignation, or whatever you choose to call it,

have its usual full swing, and do to the child whatever you are accustomed to do under such circumstances.

And then go aside, sit down quietly, and try to analyze your state of mind, honestly and without prejudice.

Place on one side your genuine fear for the future of child, if he is allowed to defy you, and your dread of the disastrous effects upon himself of such defiance.

On the other side, place your ... offended pride, your wounded self-love, and the feeling of chagrin because *your* will has been flouted ... and [the] shame that your practise ... squares so ill with what your friend has heard you say about your strictness with your child (R 130).

14:1.1 When it becomes necessary to administer punishment, when discipline must become active and aggressive,

when parents and teachers find themselves the victims of righteous or some other sort of indignation,

they will do well to pause for a moment and practise a little self-analysis.

Ask yourself a few honest questions, such as: Am I offended because I have been affronted? Am I peeved that my superior wisdom should be questioned?

Again, a parent or teacher might ask, How much of what I am about to do is truly in the interest of

this child's present welfare and future progress?

How much of my program of discipline or punishment is due to

my own hurt feelings, my own sense of shame, my own sensitiveness to being questioned or resisted?

14:1.2 As parents we should proceed on the idea that we are not trying to

[T]here is but one way in which **blind obedience** ... can be procured ... That way is by the constant operation of an over-mastering, all-engrossing **fear** of the person who gives that order (R 131).

secure the **blind obedience** of **fear**.

We want to encourage, on the part of our children,

Such a fear will operate only when the child knows ... that the dreaded parent may see, or hear of, his disobedience.... And we have still further removed the possibility of his gradually learning to make **decisions for himself**, on their own merits, uninfluenced by the slavish **fear of punishment** (R 132).

those **personal decisions** which are based on intelligence,

and which are rendered as the result of an understanding of the mutual obligations of the situation.

We do not want obedience, particularly of the older children, to be based on a **fear of punishment**; neither should the promise of rewards figure in it to any extent, tho **I would permit** this influence to continue over into adolescence many years after the fear of punishment has largely been left behind.

[contd] For all through the question of the prescribing or administering of discipline for a child, our guiding thought should be, not so much what the *immediate* effect shall be, as what the **ultimate end** is that we hope to accomplish (R 132).

14:1.3 **Permanent results** are what we are seeking, not slavish submission.

The saying of John the Baptist, with reference to the Master, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” is one that every parent should grave deep upon the tablets of his heart (R 135).

Let us say then that

our discipline must be such as will lead a child in safety

through the physical perils of a dependent childhood,

out into the ordered, self-controlled freedom of adult American manhood or womanhood. Our adult citizenship, with its spiritual independence and its vigorous, upstanding, selfdetermining manhood, is radically different from the combination of servile obedience to authority above, and overbearing rudeness to those lower down in the social scale, that constitutes the worst kind of Prussian junkerdom (R 136).

It seems to me that the sublime pinnacle of parenthood is very sincerely to take the attitude toward the adolescent child that

John the Baptist assumed toward Jesus when he said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

That is the unselfish and farseeing attitude which every parent should strive to attain.

14:1.4 As I view it,

the ideal of discipline is to effect such direction of a child as will carry it safely

through the physical perils and moral dangers inevitably attendant upon childhood,

to that ultimate self-mastery which is the goal of civilized citizenship.

14:1.5 Military discipline is good in its place. You cannot build and work an army without it, but the success of an army is entirely dependent upon the subjugation of the individual will, opinion, and initiative to mass function—perfect subjection to a superior commanding officer.

But that is just the opposite of what we desire in good citizens in a democracy; they should be self-controlled individuals who can think, feel, and act for themselves, as well as in cooperation with their fellow citizens. Military discipline can never be the ideal for home culture.

XII: THE MORAL LIFE (Tracy 160)

Another outstanding feature in the character of most children and young people is their readiness to admit the need and the justice of punishment, not merely for others, which would be comparatively easy, but for themselves, which is not so easy.

They deeply resent punishments which they regard as undeserved, and, therefore, unjustly inflicted;

but where the guilt is real, they are ready to say that punishment ought to be inflicted, and even to maintain that its effect upon them is salutary.

They do not even plead for light punishment, but recognize that the penalty should fit the crime, even though it might be hard to bear. Moreover, the normal adolescent, both boy and girl, seems to have reached the point in the understanding of the real nature of virtue ... (T 177).

14:1.6 Most youth are willing to acknowledge the need of punishment when it really exists.

While the adolescent resents unjust or unfair criticism,

he is ever ready to admit his guilt when it is clear-cut and definite and is usually willing to undergo just correction.

Adolescent youth have attained the point where a sense of justice is developing,

and they are ordinarily disposed to recognize that "the punishment should fit the crime."

It has been my observation that children do not seek to escape the penalty for their misdeeds, tho they do rightfully resent being disciplined for conduct which they do not regard as wrong, and for mere mistakes and shortcomings—errors that were unintentional or due to misunderstanding.

YOUTHFUL NEGATIVISM

IX: THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY EVER ASSUMED—DISCIPLINING A CHILD (Richardson 124)

Modern psychology has a very cogent explanation for the difficulties experienced by the parent who prefers to drive at his discipline by what he chooses to call the “old-fashioned method” of getting obedience. There is inherent in every one of us, (and in our children quite as definitely as in ourselves) ... a certain dogged, stubborn resistance to the imposition of all authority from without, called “NEGATIVISM” (R 137).

14:2.1 Negativism, a recently recognized trait, seems to be inherent in all children and very strongly developed in some.

It is that early, innate expression of the sovereignty of personality which resents the imposition of authority from without.

One thing is certain, by indirect but wise suggestion we can do much more to secure effective cooperation and obedience from even very young children than by the constant reiteration of “Don’t do this” and “Don’t do that.”

[See 14:2.10, below, where Richardson describes young children delivering “perfect parodies of our own style of issuing orders!”]

14:2.2 I recently heard one of my colleagues tell an experience with his little four-year-old. Her name was Elizabeth, and it greatly chagrined her mother and grandmother that she could not pronounce her name. They would drill her by the hour, something like this: “Now say E. Say Liza. Now say Eliza. Now say Beth. Now, honey, say Elizabeth.” But to all this she only replied: “Tan’t say it.” After weeks of this, imagine the mother’s surprize one day to find Elizabeth belaboring her little sister, fourteen months younger, something after this fashion: “Now say E. Say Liza. Now say Eliza. Now say Beth. Now, honey, say Elizabeth,” and pronouncing the word just as distinctly as any adult could!

14:2.3 We have all had this same experience. I recall a mother who came to consult me a few years ago about her little daughter, Nellie. One day she asked Nellie to do something—she admits that she spoke rather hastily and petulantly. For some reason the child’s resentment was aroused. She stamped her foot and said, “Nellie won’t.” After repeated admonitions her only response was, “Nellie won’t.” And Nellie sat in a chair for three and a half hours before she capitulated.

By the way, this is sometimes the best sort of punishment for the younger group of children.

[Compare: [I]t was [Joseph’s] practice to sit down with the boy and fully explain the real and underlying reasons for the necessity of disciplinary curtailment of personal desires.... When the situation had been explained to Jesus, he was always intelligently and willingly co-operative with parental wishes and family regulations (123:3.9).]

Just set them down to think it over after you have done your best to explain the situation fully.

14:2.4 I think much of the trouble during adolescence comes from adverse suggestions. We overemphasize things. Even younger children will sometimes carry dishes about safely until admonished, “Don’t drop those dishes!” “Watch out! You will drop that dish.” This makes them self-conscious, and almost invariably they will do the very thing they are warned not to. Over-emphasis about clothing, diet, and many other things sometimes serves to develop a lifelong self-consciousness regarding them.

14:2.5 Let us remember, too, that in dealing with youth

On the other hand we would not, if we could, completely do away with this very definite manifestation of individuality.... For it is quite as important for an individual to have strong aversions, as it is for him to have strong predilections; to have powerful dislikes, as to have powerful likes.

we should not break down all their strong aversions.

There are some things for which they should have a strong dislike later on in life—lying, stealing,

A strong aversion to alcohol makes a sober citizen.

alcohol,

A strong aversion toward immorality, makes for cleanness of character.

and vice, for instance.

A hatred of wickedness, spells righteousness.

There is need for

strong repugnance and hate in this world;

so these should not be unqualifiedly combated in childhood.

If you doubt the value of negativism in the right place, and the tragedy of the lack of the power and the willingness to say “No!” and to mean it, at the proper time, just look around at the spineless he-flappers and she-flappers that follow any suggested course, no matter how little satisfaction it offers, provided only that it is the fad of the moment (R 138-39).

We must not develop the Pollyanna type of young men and women.

They will not make vigorous leaders when they grow up to manhood and womanhood.

We do not want children who are powerless to say no;

so let us help them, if they have strong tendencies toward negativism, to

We are to harness [the child’s negativism], direct it, make it work *for* us instead of *against* us. We are to utilize its destructive powers, not against *ourselves*, and the things that we consider desirable and of good report, but against the evil, *undesirable* suggestions emanating from *others*.

direct it against the evil in themselves and others

and not just against other personalities.

If our recommendations for the desirable things can come, not as orders from above, with the negativism-arousing force of commands, but instead as suggestions running with the natural bent of the child, we may succeed in avoiding collision with this obstructive force altogether.

14:2.6 We can do very much to avoid arousing the undesirable negativism in youth by the way in which we approach them:

14:2.7 1. *By the method of giving commands—*

For every parent knows, just as every army officer knows, that even direct commands can be given in such a way as either to invite cooperation,

or to put a premium on disobedience! (R 140)

The avoidance of issues, that a less wary parent either makes or blunders into, constitutes a very important phase of the fine art of successful parenthood (R 140).

The more we can employ toward our children that fine tact and courtesy that we are proud to lavish upon the casual guest in our home, the easier will be our task of guiding our children along the ways that we would have them follow (R 140-41).

We can give commands with a smile, with more or less of the intonation that signifies a friendly plea for cooperation.

We can employ indirect intimations in the vein of “Will you do me this favor,” or “I am sure I can depend on you to help me this way.” The tone of the voice has a lot to do with the arousal of negativism. Even a dog knows whether to wag his tail or not when he hears the sound of his master’s voice.

14:2.8 2. Avoiding direct issues—

A little more patience, a little more wisdom in the way we put up propositions to youth would do much to avoid negativism and antagonism. There is always more than one way to approach a problem; select your method carefully, especially if you know your request is going to be more or less disagreeable or irritating to the one concerned.

14:2.9 3. Courteous consideration—

After all,

we speak kindly and courteously to those we really love;

that is, if we stop to think. Too many parents indulge in a fault of which they are very critical in their children—thoughtlessness.

[*Compare*: Dean Jones of Yale is credited with this definition of freedom of speech: “The liberty to say what you think without thinking what you say.”—*Chicago Tribune*. (Quoted in *Literary Digest* for December 6, 1919, p. 102).]

Someone, commenting on the new-fangled doctrine of uncontrolled emotions, says it means that we claim the divine right to “say what we think without thinking what we say.”

Courtesy will go a long way toward side-stepping the arousal of youthful negativism.

14:2.10 4. *Indirect suggestions*—

Instead of saying to Mary in a commanding way or in a superior tone, “Mary, go over and shut that door,” less antagonism would be aroused if one were to say, “Doesn’t it seem a bit cold in here? I wonder if it is turning cold.” More than likely Mary will volunteer to shut the door without being directly asked.

Whether we are in the habit of addressing our children with courtesy or with curtness will be shown

It is an illuminating experience ... to “listen in” at the play of our children, and to observe the harsh, curt tones of the older children as they give commands to the younger ones, in what they conceive to be the approved manner for adults ... We shall recognize, to our own discomfiture, that words, tone, and look are frequently perfect parodies of our own style of issuing orders! (R 142)

in the way in which they talk to the younger children.

14:2.11 I well understand that

Give direct commands to your children, by all means; but do it only in such cases as would justify your giving similar direct commands to your wife, your intimate friend, or your business associate. In other words, there undoubtedly are times when the short, sharp, peremptory command is essential;

where its employment, followed by quick, unhesitating obedience, may even be the means of saving a life that would otherwise be lost.

But for one such case ... there are a hundred or more instances in which the sharp, curt command is employed in dealing with one's child, where the courteous one would have been every bit as efficacious ... (R 143-44).

Another pedagogic principle may be adduced in this connection. That is a very simple one, that requests and commands be couched, as far as possible, in the affirmative,

avoiding wherever feasible the pestilential negative, in the form of the prohibition (R 144).

It certainly is the case that "Don't do that!" arouses a far stronger antagonism than does the precisely equivalent "Do this!" (R 144)

occasions arise in which it is necessary to give direct and peremptory commands,

situations in which the maintenance of discipline necessitates the exercise of arbitrary authority;

but such emergencies are not frequent in well-managed homes.

14:2.11 We should also try, as far as possible, to give our commands in the affirmative.

Avoid negatives;

use the art of suggestion in all your efforts to secure cooperation from the youngsters; try to get along without saying,

"Don't do that."

An extension of this principle is the suggestion that in commenting upon, or “correcting,” the work of children [*e.g.* a spelling paper] in schools, the emphasis be laid upon the affirmative or positive side,

instead of picking out the faults and emphasizing them exclusively (R 145)

In fine, then, **discipline must be courteous, not curt;**

affirmative, not negative;

approving, not critical and carping;

and vitalizing, not deadening, if it is to be of any use at all,

and not **a downright detriment to the children upon whom we practise it** (R 148).

One invariable rule should be laid down, however, by anyone who honestly decides to employ corporal punishment.

And that is, that the adult who punishes must do so only after he has divested himself of **all personal feeling** in the particular instance (R 149).

In the light of modern psychology, **I think** even in school examinations sometimes a great deal more would be accomplished if

papers were graded on a system of marking the good points

rather than of emphasizing the bad ones.

In short, **discipline must be courteous, not curt;**

affirmative, not negative;

approving, not critical and carping;

and vitalizing, not deadening, if it is to be of any use at all;

otherwise it will be **a downright detriment to the children upon whom we practise it.**

14:2.12 Whatever the theories about discipline,

one thing is certain:

when it comes to corporal punishment,

all personal feeling must be completely eliminated.

Never punish when you are angry. If you have lost your temper, sleep over the matter. In dealing with our own children, justice at least, if not mercy, must prevail; vengeance is unworthy of parenthood. Always, before beginning the administration of punishment, stop to consider how the child is going to look at it.

VII: KEEPING IN TOUCH (Drury 101)

Foolish fathers by unguarded talk and false sentimentality cast about their boys a fog of failure by saying:

“I don’t care whether you fail or pass, so long as you’re *a good boy!*” (as though progress wasn’t a part of goodness!) Or “I never could spell, or write compositions. *I never could get beyond quadratic equations,*”

thereby *setting up mediocrity* as the family motto and making a sort of virtue out of failure foredoomed (D 108).

[*Compare:* Some fathers err by too heavy pressure on tender youth. They insist on a *certain standard*, they make the mark on the school report a veritable fetish ... (D 108).]

Intelligent reading means *reading with increasing speed.** [**Vide* O’Brien, *Silent Reading*, ch. iv, ff.]

14:2.13 Discipline in the home is much affected by what the child hears. How can you expect cooperation from a child in its educational training if it hears

the father continually say,

“Well, I only went as far as cube root myself.”

If the family *sets up a standard of mediocrity,*

that is likely to be the goal of the adolescent.

Far better that parents should maintain *certain standards* in the home,

not only as regards language and literature, but also with reference to reading.

I mean the *speed of reading.*

A father should time his boy. He should at the age of fourteen be able to read

20 pages of Slosson's Creative Chemistry an hour or 25 pages of The Scottish Chiefs (D 115).

Teachers welcome conference with parents about the boy and his development. This is a growing partnership, and though self-conscious youth dreads the visits of father or mother at the school ("Oh mother, *don't* interfere," or "oh father, *they* know how to run the school!")

something can be learned about the whole boy by keeping in touch with his schooling (D 110).

Sometimes it is necessary to study a passage—to go over it carefully—but how much time could be saved in later life if

youth could be taught to read,

say, twenty-five or thirty pages an hour of an ordinary book!

ADOLESCENT SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

14:3.1 This curse of self-consciousness which becomes so accentuated in the adolescent is the cause of much trouble in the home.

Many a boy who dearly loves his mother, who would not hesitate to give his life for her in any emergency, writhes with shame and is burned up with remorse when this same mother visits the school to inquire how her children are progressing.

Still more is he humiliated if she happens to wear some article of clothing which is a bit out of fashion. The embarrassment of adolescence is not an ordinary emotional reaction—it is a calamitous catastrophe.

These sensitive, self-conscious youth are stirred to the very depths of their souls by some trifling item of parental conduct which might be regarded as not quite up-to-date, a little bit queer or peculiar.

14:3.2 Boys not only crave to be distinguished themselves, but they want to see their fathers distinguished. Nothing is so depressing to a developing boy as an inactive, indolent, unambitious, and unprogressive father. Adolescent boys and girls hate to see their parents deteriorate physically, socially, or mentally. Parents must distinguish themselves adequately in the eyes of their children in order to hold their respect; they should not try to secure this recognition arbitrarily through parental authority.

14:3.3 There ought to be in the home an atmosphere of mutual admiration. Whatever the situation, the father must not lose his status of superiority—at least in some phases of life's activity—as he is viewed by his children.

14:3.4 The adolescent boy may be shy, sensitive, and awkward, but he is attracted by men who achieve, and even tho he lives in close contact with his father and comes to discern in him many shortcomings, he nevertheless continues to look up to him if he is a man who does things. The father must maintain some point of superiority in order to retain the respect of his increasingly skeptical, cynical, and critical son.

ADOLESCENT CRITICISM

V: WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR CRITICAL YOUTH? (Coe 68)

I. WHAT AILS OUR CRITICAL YOUTH? (Coe 69)

What shall we do with such youths?

First of all, **listen** to them!

Listen, not as to some freakish novelty; listen, not as to an enemy whom we would entrap in his own words; **listen**, not as to a new and better authority,

but as to fellow-travellers and explorers who may possibly see in the environment what we have not yet seen, who may possibly remind us of something in the path already traversed that we are ignoring, who may possibly realize the difficulties ahead and strengthen our courage to meet them (C 73).

II. HOW DOES OUR CIVILIZATION LOOK TO THE EYES OF CRITICAL YOUTH? (Coe 73)

On the whole, the criticism of modern life that emanates from youth is a criticism of the **ends that we pursue.**

14:4.1 Adolescents are **critical**, often hypercritical.

What attitude are we oldsters to take toward this youthful characteristic?

It is not easy to answer this question in detail. **Of one thing I am sure—**

we can all **listen** patiently to youth's proposals.

We can **listen** sincerely, not as all-wise overlords,

but as fellow travelers along the highway of life,

as fellow searchers for the truth.

Both old and young, both children and parents, need more of this attitude of fellowship.

14:4.2 Present-day youth are becoming critical of the **objects of living.**

What I have called in this essay “the vocation of living” is the chief interest of the youth movement.

The simple joys of robust health, open air, the beauty of nature, folk-song and festival, sincerity of speech, unvarnished good fellowship;

free intelligence and the development of the capacity of all for making and creating;

art as daily food rather than as a mere appendage of the common life;

the utilization of science, not to enhance the profits of the few but to enlarge the life of all;

government, not in the interest of a race or of a class but of humanity as such;

world-peace, not as an equilibrium of selfish interests maintained by fear but as a possible world-fellowship and world-co-operation—these are the goals toward which the movement tends, one goal being emphasized by this group, another by that (C 73-74).

In particular, it endeavors to judge this civilization by the ends that it pursues,

and by the actual condition of human life,

rather than by the elaborateness, precision, or power of its machinery (C 75).

Someone, in speaking for them,

has said they want

“the simple joys of robust health, open air, the beauty of nature, folksong and festival, sincerity of speech, unvarnished good fellowship;

free intelligence and the development of the capacity of all for making and creating;

art as daily food rather than as a mere appendage of the common life;

the utilization of science, not to enhance the profits of the few but to enlarge the life of all;

government, not in the interest of a race or of a class but of humanity as such.”

14:4.3 And I am pretty much in sympathy with this new youth movement when

it judges civilization by the ends it pursues,

by the actual results produced,

rather than by its great show of scientific precision or even by its admittedly improved mechanical achievements.

V: WHAT IS THE PROPER PLACE OF CRITICAL YOUTH IN OUR SOCIETY? (Coe 86)

And let us older heads remember that the chief danger that the young encounter is not any temptation to radicalism,

but the soporific of conventionality. They imitate us too much, not too little; alas, that so few of them are aware of our faults!

The best policy is to increase the number of critical youth as fast as we can (C 80).

III: SHALL NOT AGE LEARN FROM YOUTH AS WELL AS YOUTH FROM AGE? RATHER, SHALL NOT YOUTH AND AGE LEARN TOGETHER? (Coe 76)

What is needed just now is thinking and learning together (C 76).

14:4.4 It seems to me we should encourage this independence of thinking, this daring to analyze the objectives of living, on the part of youth, especially the older adolescents.

The real trouble with our young people is not that they are too original, too independent;

they are altogether too much inclined to imitate us oldsters.

In the end, generation after generation, the civilization of the world is going to be further advanced if

youth can be encouraged to become increasingly critical, if at the same time they are analytical;

increasingly independent, if at the same time they can remain level-headed and practical.

14:4.5 The ideal we must keep before us in our efforts to solve these problems created by the pretentious program of our new youth, is that we are to go along through life trying to learn lessons together.

If, when thoughtful youth speaks, we stop our ears; if we isolate these youths, saying in spirit: “Smarties! Let’s see you do these big things that you prate about!”

yes, even if we pat these youths on the back, and tell them that their idealism is very creditable to them, but do not endeavor to *think with* them if we allow our sense of the superiority of maturity to govern us, then we shall rob ourselves and future society of an incalculably precious asset (C 76).

This will involve on our part consent to reopen questions that we have regarded as closed. The foundations of our moral standards are no exception; let them be freely re-examined, with the possibility—the probability—that rebuilding will be necessary (C 80).

[“... the truth never suffers from honest examination ...” (153:2.11).]

The young folks must quit regarding adults as “old fogies,” “out-of-date,” “back numbers,”

and we must quit referring to youth as “smarties” and “smart-alecks.”

Let us oldsters abandon our attitude of superiority

and encourage the young people to refrain from glorifying inexperience.

Young and old together sometimes can make a united attack upon their common problems and difficulties with great mutual profit.

14:4.6 I don’t know why we parents should be disinclined to participate with our own offspring in

the fearless reexamination of our standards of living and all the rest of the conventions of society.

If our motives are honest, examination of these yardsticks of living can only serve to discredit superstition, errors, and untruth.

The good and the true will not suffer from such sincere scrutiny.

Why should we hesitate to take hold with the youngsters and to seek to reconstruct and otherwise improve the ways of modern living?

FEAR OF LIBERTY

14:5.1 Both adolescents and adults talk a great deal about liberty. Civilized races crave freedom of thought and action, but when once we gain the liberties we so much desire, we are all but afraid of them. No sooner are we set free than we begin to surround ourselves with new rules and regulations. Even adolescent youth, ere they are twenty-five years of age, begin to conventionalize their unconventionalities; no sooner does one generation break away from the tabus of the preceding generation than it subjects itself to equally senseless and conventional regulations.

[Note: Coe cites Stanley High's 1923 book, *The Revolt of Youth*, in a footnote on p. 69.]

14:5.2 I am not greatly worried about the so-called revolt of youth,

this desire to be free and independent, to find new and better ways for doing things, to visualize new objectives for living. I think this restless, progressive tendency is in many respects commendable. True, like all agitations having for their objective greater freedom of action, it is likely to entail certain evils; but the movement as a whole represents progress. What concerns me most is that it so soon stops. By the time our youth have got their shoulders fairly under the responsibilities of the workaday world, they have largely abandoned this quest for independence, so that before they are thirty years of age they are all but conservative;

their radicalism has vanished; they can scarcely be classed as liberals; they have started in to create for the young folks of the next generation new, rigid, and unyielding standards of thinking and acting.

14:5.3 Our youth is radical in his teens; by the time he reaches his later twenties, economic pressure, the desire to enjoy the pleasures of living, and the quest for the wherewithal to obtain these pleasures, have somehow converted this hyper-progressive adolescent into an altogether calm and pretty well-controlled conservative adult—one who has all but adopted the conventions of his elders.

14:5.4 It seems that the maintenance of an intelligent and progressive revolt is too difficult a task; it represents too much hard work; the temptation to have a good time and take it easy is too attractive. These influences, taken in connection with the herd instinct, all tend to encourage our restless youth to conventionalize their revolt, to standardize even their protest against standards.

MAKING THE ISSUE CLEAR

14:6.1 It may be well, in concluding this chapter, briefly to summarize my position on these important questions.

14:6.2 First, with reference to discipline: I believe that reasonable, fair, and just discipline must be maintained at all times—at home, at school, and in society at large. I do not for one moment countenance the new and bizarre notion that youth must be allowed to grow up uncontrolled.

Social order and self-control are indispensable to civilization. Persistent discipline alone will enable young men and women to gain that personal control over their emotions which is required to produce an efficient and happy life.

14:6.3 With reference to punishment, I find it a bit more difficult to define my position. But let me reiterate that I think every effort should be made to deal with adolescents without resorting to harsh reprisals or corporal punishment. In general, I believe this can be done if proper discipline has been maintained throughout preadolescent years. I am confident that we are in possession of enough data respecting the psychology of youth to enable us to direct them without overmuch employment of the old-fashioned arbitrary procedures and punishments. Notwithstanding my strong leanings toward the indirect and more conciliatory technique of the newer psychology in the management of adolescents, I am strongly convinced that respect for authority must be maintained at all costs. When, therefore, our educational efforts, moral suasion, and other psychologic devices fail, I believe we are justified in enforcing discipline, even by corporal punishment; tho I am strongly convinced that where wisdom, patience, and diplomacy are employed, this will seldom be necessary.

[*Note:* Notice how Sadler omits mentioning his heavy reliance on the few source books he used to write this chapter.]

14:6.4 In writing this book I have endeavored to get every possible viewpoint of this question. I have taken frequent counsel of my wife and son, and in my endeavor to be fair and present the matter from all sides, it may appear that the discussions of it in various chapters are not always in perfect agreement.

SOURCE

14: DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

If it should thus seem to the reader, let him remember that any apparent discrepancy is due to my effort to present all sides and phases of the problem.