

# *Family Talk*

## *Talk So They'll Correct Their Own Behavior*

by  
George Creach, MA., L.P.C.  
Hillary M. Motsinger, Ed.D., L.P.C.

Course II – Unit 7, Lesson 3  
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[www.nlbm.org](http://www.nlbm.org)

*“If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature...”*  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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## Talk So They'll Correct Their Own Behavior

As parents, we can restrain, punish or withhold privileges to get our children to correct their misbehavior, but we cannot change their behavior. They alone, have that power. This lesson will assist parents in talking to their children in such a manner as to facilitate self-corrective behavior.

Before continuing, please write three or four sentences describing how you normally talk when you see your children misbehaving. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed Response Sheet and then put it out of your sight until the end of the lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up any of the scriptures. Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Response Sheet.

### I. Introduction

#### A. Importance of how we talk to our children

1. Our children want to be accepted, approved and loved by us. They gauge our level of acceptance, approval and love by the way we speak to them.
2. Our children want to interact with us. Our tone of voice, our volume and speed tell our children if it is safe to talk with us now or wait.
3. Our children want to please us. When we talk in an encouraging manner, they have the courage, energy and desire to please us. When we talk in a negative manner, neither of these three traits is evident.
4. Our children want to act in accordance with their own genetic behavioral style (dominant, influencing, supportive, or cautious.)
5. Our children eventually want to solve their own problems and correct their own mistakes. The manner in which we talk to them is paramount in helping them reach their goals of self-corrective behavior.

#### B. Summary

1. Training a child to correct his own behavior is a complex task. We have to take certain steps ourselves to accomplish that. The younger the child the more directive we need to be. As the child gets older we let him suffer the consequences of the behavior and then as adults we set him free.
2. I recommend that we aim at setting children free by age 18. Whatever good that comes, they get all the credit for it. And whatever bad that comes, they get to pay the penalty for it. It may be that the paying of the penalty is the one activity that will cause them to correct their own behavior.

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#### II. Parent Talk in Building Self-Correction Skills (I Samuel 3:12-13; Proverbs 3:12, 13:24, 15:1, 23:13-14; Jeremiah 10:23-24; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21)

- A. Ignore behavior unless it is dangerous or has dangerous results. All children are naturally curious. They learn through curiosity. Most of their behavior is due to their trying to learn something. There are times when a child's curiosity is dangerous, or the results can be dangerous. If so, the parents need to correct the child. The method used will depend on the age and nature of the child. The younger the child, the simpler, but more directive the explanation needs to be. A child of one or two years does not need a detailed explanation of dangers of playing in the street. Telling him not to do it because he could be hurt is enough. An older child, especially a teenager, deserves a more logical and detailed explanation for the need to change dangerous behavior. The teenager also needs to have a chance to explain behavior and suffer from the consequences.
- B. Overkill it (reverse psychology) unless it is dangerous or has dangerous results. If the behavior is losing behavior, it needs to be corrected. One method is to have the child repeat the behavior over and over again until he no longer wants to do it. It is important that the overkill method be used only on those types of behavior that are not dangerous or have dangerous results. You could use it with "yelling" or eating certain foods, but you would not want to use it if you were trying to stop your teen from using drugs.
- C. Redirect it. Make sure that the child knows and understands that certain behavior is undesirable and will not be allowed. Do not leave the child in a vacuum. Help him find some other behavior that is acceptable. A child, especially a young one, does not understand why certain behavior is unacceptable. Explain to him why it is; then give options of acceptable behavior.
- D. Withhold privileges until the wrong type of behavior is corrected. Withholding privileges is an effective way to change behavior. This can be extremely tricky. It will work only when the child values the privilege that is being withheld. When trying to change behavior, set reasonable and reachable goals. Help the child learn that he can accomplish something and build self-confidence. Once he has reached a goal, restore the withheld privilege.
- E. Correct the child with care, love and caution. Correction can be either verbal or physical. We will take a closer look at physical correction or punishment in a later lesson. Verbal correction is discussing the child's behavior with him. Remember to talk with the child on his level. Talk *with* the child, not *to* him. The younger the

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child, the less detailed explanation needed. Your attitude when training your child for self-correction is very important. Do not do it only when you are frustrated or angry with him. All he sees is your anger and frustration. Make sure that he knows that you love him and are concerned about him. Follow Solomon's advice, "For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:12) When you correct your child, you are looking out for not only his immediate, but also, his long-term interest.

Let the child know that he is being corrected not because he is bad, but because the behavior was bad. Explain the exact reason he is being corrected, so he can later correct himself. Do not let past problems build up and then try to correct them all at once. Correct each one when it happens. This immediate self-correcting principle will prevent a multitude of problems later.

### III. Four Styles of Talking for Self-Correcting Behavior

A. Talking to the Dominant Child (High D). These are the decisive, driving, domineering, demanding, and determined children. They are not aware of their tendency to be overbearing. They need to be corrected by their parents and trained to understand and utilize these traits as strengths, not weaknesses. We need to understand that the reason that they misbehave is to achieve a goal they have set, which normally relates to taking the leadership in a group situation without your approval to do so. This child has a fear of being controlled. He is very reluctant to take orders and meet demands of other people.

If we are going to teach the child to be self-correcting, we need to know what his needs are. His needs are freedom to meet a challenge, to have the authority, to be respected with prestige. We say, "You can have these things when you behave in harmony with our guidelines." We have to model this type of behavior ourselves so that the child can see it. Number two, we have to set up an environment in which this kind of behavior is his natural behavior and is promoted within certain guidelines. In order to get this child to be self-correcting, we need to stick to the facts. We need to be logical. This child will not respect our emotional appeal. We need to be firm, frank, and fair and get it done very quickly. With this type child, the longer you pressure him, the more resistance he will build up. Explain it once, and expect him to carry it out. When we see the dominant child carrying out the behavior that we have laid out for him, we need to be there with a pat on the shoulder, a word of appreciation and willingness to do something with him.

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The High D (Choleric) child wants to hear these types of statements:

- You make good decisions.
- You are very determined to reach your goal.
- You are a good leader.

B. Talking to the Influencing Child (High I). This child has a very pleasant personality. He never meets a stranger, is very interactive, will invite everybody and everything to come and spend time with him at his house. He is interested in what's going on in other people's lives. He will take the initiative to start programs or create a party or any kind of social gathering. One of his greatest needs is for social interaction and he will do most anything to have people around him.

If we are going to teach the influencing child self-correcting behaviors, we have to correct him in harmony with that genetic style, so that as he gets older, what we have put into him is a method that is not in conflict with his natural style. If it is in conflict and he does accept it, he will eventually drop it.

If we are going to change the child's behavior, we need to do it in such a way that he will gain popularity from it, increase his social circle, and persuade other people to do things. This child also fears being ignored. If he is ignored for a long period of time, he will create another misbehavior in order to get negative attention. He would rather have your negative attention than to have you ignore him. In teaching him to correct a behavior, it must prove to be beneficial to him. The strength that this child has, as you already know, is that of encouraging and persuading other people. We must show him that by correcting his behavior he will have opportunity to persuade and encourage others.

The High I (Sanguine) child likes to hear these types of statements:

- You are good at encouraging others.
- People like to listen to you.
- You are good at joining in.

C. Talking to the Supportive Child (High S). The supportive child is the easiest one to correct, but is one of the most difficult to teach to correct his own behavior. This type of child wants our approval. He wants to find out what we want him to do and then he will do it. He will continue to do it only so long as we continue with the encouragement or the correction. If the child is doing what he is supposed to be doing, he needs constant encouragement. If he is not doing what we want him to do, he needs our constant correcting. This is very difficult because this type child is so sweet, so nice, so gentle; but yet he does not want to correct his own behavior because he does not see his own behavior as a mistake.

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The High S (Phlegmatic) child wants to hear these types of statements:

- You are a pleasant person to be with.
- You are a very supportive person.
- You are a good listener.

D. Talking to the Cautious Child (High C). This child is very difficult to correct because he, in many cases, is the most self-correcting child of the four styles. In fact, this child makes very few mistakes. So when we are building self-correcting skills into this child, we need to understand that basically he comes prepackaged with self-correcting skills. This child is not as emotional, as he is cognitive, clinical and cautious. He has a fear of being criticized. He will find an area in which he is very good and will become very perfectionistic in that area. The problem with that is that he will leave some areas, outside of that specific area, totally undeveloped. When we are approaching him to teach self-correcting skills, he does not necessarily need approval so much as he needs approval for the projects, the tasks on which he is working. He will correct himself much better if given a logical structure to follow, such as step one, two, three for correcting behavior. We will get better results if we are very consistent in what we say to him about his mistakes. Focus not on the child, but focus on the mistake. He has an inborn trait called quality control.

The High C (Melancholy) child likes to hear these types of comments:

- Your work is outstanding.
- You think before you act.
- You are a hard worker.

E. Summary. In correcting our children we approach them in such a way that we move into *their* behavioral style, which means we might have to move out of our comfort zone, but we do it because we want the child to later be able to have a self-corrective behavior in his own mind. It means we have to sacrifice, but that is okay, because when that training moment is over, we can go back to our comfort zone and use the style of behavior which makes us comfortable.

## V. Comparison of Punishment vs. Self-Correction for Misbehavior

When we focus on punishing the child for misbehavior, we are simply focusing on getting even with the child. There are several weaknesses to that practice which will be discussed in a later unit. The major weakness is that it does not share with that child what is correct for him to be doing. What we want from our children is for them to be

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able to grow up and leave us as independent and productive people who have the talent and ability to be successful. One of the major traits of successful people is that they have the ability to make self-corrections before someone else has to penalize them for their mistakes.

We recommend that you practice talking to your children according to the self-correction style.

Below are tables that will explain the tendencies, the attitudes and behaviors learned and the probable results, when we talk to our children from a punishment orientation. The second table will give tendencies, attitudes and behaviors learned and probable results that will come when we use a self-correction orientation.

The following tables provide some examples of what happens when parents focus on punishment as opposed to focusing on correction. The first column gives a trait and the usual verbal message that goes with it. The second column tells what type of behavior the child learns from that message. The third gives the most likely result from the message.

Table 7-1. Focus On Punishment (What Is Wrong and Why)

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Tendency Traits	Attitude/Behavior Learned	Probable Results
1. Extremely demanding “Shape up, or....”	Severity	Discouragement
2. Emphasize the wrong “Don't you know...?”	Avoid the “wrong”	Limited behavior
3. Physical pain “I'll beat the ....”	Don't get caught	Short-lived
4. Omnipotent “Do as I say....”	Position controls	Overly obedient
5. Negative personal judgment “You can't do....”	I'm not okay	Avoidance/I can't win
6. Filled with threats “If I ever....”	Fear of person in power	Extremes in aggression
7. Revenge “This will teach you not to....”	Please the adult	Con artist/ Reluctant obedience

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8. Intense concur “Where did I go....”	I get attention when bad	Do it again
9. Constant, no-matter-what behavior. “You are....”	Pay the cost	Do it, if it's worth the punishment
10. Cold disposition “As long as you....”	Be submissive	Depressed or angry

Table 7-2. Focus On Correction (What Is Correct and Why)

Tendency Traits	Attitude/Behavior Learned	Probable Results
1. Self-control “We can solve it.”	Rational behavior	Self-discipline
2. Balance the wrong/correct “If you were to do it over, what....”	Weigh results	Productive behavior
3. Thought provoking “Let's look at the situation.”	Value of productive behavior	Long-range results
4. Violates our standards “What are our standards?”	Care/concern for others	Commitment to the group
5. Negative actions judged “What did you do?”	I'm okay— my acts are not okay.	Belonging to the group
6. Listen, then act “What are the the results of your actions?”	My behavior, not me, is questioned.	Moderation in behavior
7. Insulated versus internalization “We know you don't like us, but....”	Correction over punishment	Respect for authority
8. Withdrawal of attention “We do not approve...”	Misbehavior costs	Act in harmony with group
9. Cost vs. Behavior “Because of this act, you will....”	Pays to act right	Do right because it is right to do right
10. Trusting “We have faith in you....”	Feel accepted and confident	Be truthful and responsible

### III. Conclusion

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Children do not learn on their own. They need parents to teach and guide them. All children will act on their own, often against their own best interests and the wishes of their parents. At these times, it will be necessary for parents to correct them. If correction does not work, punishment is necessary. There are right and wrong ways to correct and punish a child. If parents learn how to administer correction and punishment in the right way, the child will grow and develop into a healthy, loving, caring, adult. It is a big responsibility. It does not just happen. You, the parent, have to work at it.

**Now, please return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**