

# Constructive Guidance and Discipline

Birth to Age Eight



SEVENTH EDITION



Marjorie V. Fields  
Patricia A. Meritt  
Deborah M. Fields

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## DEDICATION

For the cause of  
worldwide peace and harmony.

*May it begin in  
the hearts of children  
and spread.*

*And may teachers  
be sowers of the seeds  
of peace and harmony.*

# About the Authors



**Marjorie Fields** Marjorie has recently retired after teaching in the field of early childhood education for more than 30 years. She first taught kindergarten, then first grade, and then began teaching teachers. Thanks to her own children, she also had experience in cooperative preschools and various types of childcare.

Marjorie has a Doctorate in Early Childhood Education with Research in Parent Involvement. She has been active in early childhood professional organizations at the national and local levels; she recently served as president of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) and has also served as vice president of that association. Dr. Fields has also served on the national governing board for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). She has published extensively in the field of emergent literacy, including the textbook *Let's Begin Reading Right* (Merrill/Prentice Hall), as well as in the field of child guidance.

This book is the result of more than 30 years of reading and thinking in conjunction with developing and teaching early childhood discipline courses. Dr. Fields credits her two sons with initially helping her learn what is most important about child guidance and discipline. She now continues to learn from her grandchildren, their parents, and their teachers.



**Patty Meritt** Patty currently serves as Professor of Early Childhood Education for the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, where she has been nominated multiple times as teacher of the year. She has taught child guidance in several formats, including workshops, as a full course on the Web, as an intensive, compressed course, as well as in face-to-face instruction. Although Ms. Meritt came on as an author for the sixth edition, she used the book for several earlier editions and says the book is the backbone of every guidance course she teaches. In addition to teaching at the university, Patty began her career as a college student in a parent co-op and went on to work as a classroom teacher,

before opening a private preschool. Later she took a position directing nonprofit childcare and built the corporation into a multisite, multimillion-dollar business serving thousands of families, which required regularly using many of the skills discussed in this book. Patty has an A.A. in Nursery School, a B.A. in Child Development and a Masters in Teaching. Her research has been primarily in the field of gender differences in early childhood. As a parent and now as a grandparent, she delights in continually learning, sharing, and improving her respectful responses to all children.



**Deborah M. Fields** Deborah (Debby) is a licensed mental health counselor and the Director of Social Services for Agape Adoptions, an international adoption agency. She assesses and helps to prepare families who wish to adopt children internationally from a wide variety of countries. Debby also provides post-adoption support services, assisting parents with the process of adjustment, attachment, and developing sensitive discipline practices. She is trained as a Trust-Based Relational Intervention

(TBRI) Practitioner, and enjoys seeing the powerful effect that loving, sensitive caregivers can have on children's healing and emotional development. Debby has a master's degree in marriage, family, and child counseling. In addition to her training in attachment issues, she has focused on developing culturally sensitive practices in her work with children and families. She has also worked with teen parents and in an elementary school counseling center.



# Preface

*Constructive Guidance and Discipline: Birth to Age Eight* provides early childhood professionals (and parents) with the best of approaches to help young children become happy, responsible, and productive people. We present guidance and discipline concepts within a framework of child development, developmentally appropriate practices, and constructivist education. Thus, only discipline approaches that are consistent with all three aspects of this framework are recommended here. We take a stand about what is best for young children, rather than merely presenting an impartial overview of various approaches. We are convinced that adults cannot effectively assist children's moral development through the coercive approaches of punishment or behavior modification.

Although recent editions of the text address the entire scope of early childhood, ages 0–8, we emphasize guidance for children ages 3–8. Appropriate guidance and discipline must be tied to developmental levels, and we want to acknowledge that infant and toddler development is uniquely different from that of children in the preoperational years of 3–8. Many of the principles for older children apply to younger children, but some approaches presented in this text require more emotional, social, and cognitive maturation than that attained by toddlers.

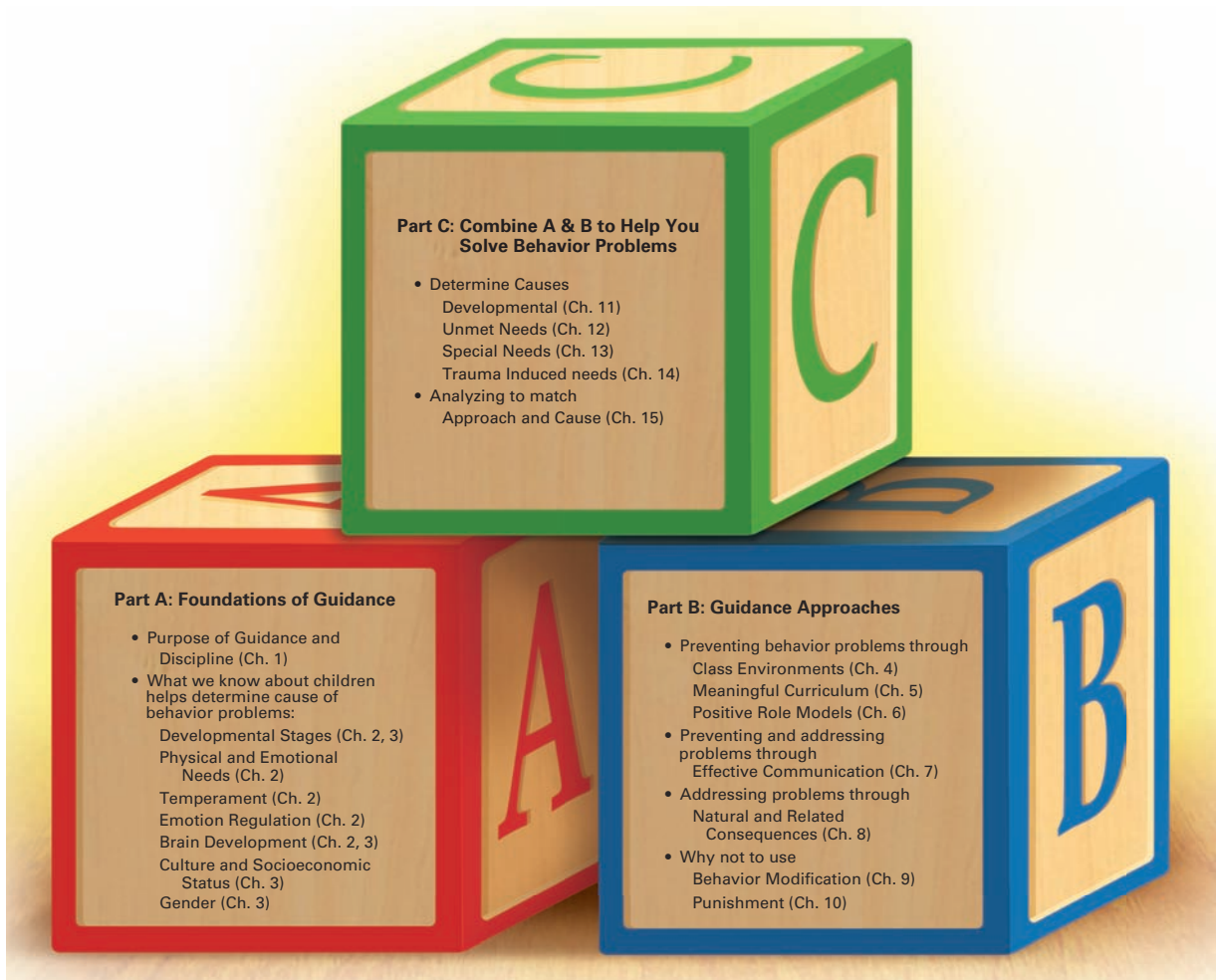
## **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

### **New Pearson eText Digital Features Enhance Learning and Assessment**

- The improved Pearson eText platform provides links to videos relevant to key concepts and topics, allowing students to view examples or extend knowledge of chapter content. Videos were selected and integrated in the eText by the authors. Although video links were included in the last edition, in this edition they are more visible and include a contextualized introduction for the student.
- A “Video Analysis” exercise in most chapters also presents students with a video to watch, combined with questions to respond to in order to demonstrate understanding of video content.
- Section quizzes, called “Check Your Understanding,” pop up in the Pearson eText, allowing students to check student understanding of concepts presented in each section. By receiving immediate feedback, students’ understanding is scaffolded. Each major chapter section and section quizzes are aligned with a chapter Learning Outcome.

### **Improvements to the Book’s Pedagogy**

- To help students better understand the text content, we have provided an organizational graphic image of 3 blocks. These blocks are used to illustrate how each of the three parts of the book and each of the chapters relate to one another.



- Chapters open with a brief scenario illustrating the type of challenges addressed in that chapter and the scenario is referred to throughout the chapter.
- Learning Outcomes are aligned with section headings and with a bulleted summary at the end of each chapter.
- End-of-chapter questions and activities are categorized into subsets for ease in making assignments.

### **New Content Keeps Pace with New Research and Current Practices**

- New information reflects the fast-growing research base on brain development, emphasizing the effects of poverty, trauma, and stress on brain development and child behavior (see Ch. 2–6, 10, and 14).
- New discussions of the role of technology as it influences child behavior reflect the fast-paced growth in the area of technology. The joint position statement on technology in early childhood programs from NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning provides a base for these discussions (see Ch. 6).



- Behavior problems associated with ever-increasing emphasis on test scores are addressed directly, including a letter from an award-winning teacher with advice about how to meet children's needs in a school setting that is not developmentally appropriate (see Ch. 5).

This edition continues and strengthens the approach of previous editions. Making the message of the book clear and understandable has always been a priority. Periodic invitations to Reflection are designed to help students think more deeply about the implications of what they are reading. Tables and figures help students synthesize key points in the text.

Since behavior modification is so pervasive in our society, the recommendations in this book require most readers to alter their thinking radically. Assisting students in a major paradigm shift requires that principles be carefully documented and clearly explained. As in previous editions, we emphasize the examples of classroom practice that students find helpful for understanding the concepts.

As before, we have worked at balancing the preschool and primary-grade-level examples, while also including those with infants and toddlers.

## **MAJOR THEORETICAL INFLUENCES**

The information and ideas presented in this text come from a number of respected sources. We see four theorists as having major influences on child guidance concepts in this century: Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, and Jean Piaget. Rudolf Dreikurs's recommendations of logical and natural consequences extended Adler's concepts; Thomas Gordon popularized Rogers's ideas through his Parent Effectiveness Training work; Skinner's work founded the widespread behavior modification techniques; and Piagetian scholars such as Constance Kamii and Rheta DeVries have spread the word about Piaget's views on the development of morality. Although we reject Skinner's approach for the reasons explained in Chapter 9, we believe that the other three theorists have compatible views. Adler, Rogers, and Piaget all perceive the child as actively seeking understanding. This perspective contrasts the Skinnerian view, which sees education as something that happens to a child from outside sources. Adler and Rogers, as well as Piaget, respect the child's personal rate and style of developing social understanding. All three perceive the proper adult role as facilitating rather than controlling the child's gradual development into a successful member of society. Piaget's theoretical framework is much broader than that of Rogers or Adler, including comprehensive moral as well as intellectual development. Thus, Adlerian and Rogerian concepts can be included as part of a Piagetian perspective, although the reverse is not true.

The research and writing of Jean Piaget and constructivist scholars regarding intellectual and moral autonomy are central to the message in this book. We also adapt Thomas Gordon's recommendations for effective communication and interpret Rudolf Dreikurs's concept of logical and natural consequences into our discussion of a constructivist approach to discipline. In addition, we draw on Erik Erikson's emotional development studies, refer to guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and often quote Rheta DeVries and Constance Kamii. Many other sources used in this book are listed in the references.

We look at guidance and discipline as teaching activities; therefore, the principles of effective early childhood education apply as much to guidance and discipline as to academics. In addition, we discuss the ways in which effective early childhood education practices prevent or alleviate many common discipline problems.

Like any other aspect of teaching, guidance must acknowledge diversity among children. In our recommendations, we consider individual differences due to innate temperament or individual physical and intellectual capabilities. We also discuss the implications of culture, gender, class, and family problems.

We recognize that teachers must often deal with kids in crisis, creating major new challenges in guidance and discipline. Chapters 2 and 3 in Part A are devoted to providing background information for teachers whose classrooms include kids with special needs or learning difficulties as well as those who have experienced difficult life situations that may make them more vulnerable to social or emotional difficulties. Then in Part C, Chapters 13 and 14, we revisit that background information and look more closely at how to support those children most in need of help.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT**

Chapters 1–3 constitute the foundations section, Part A. Chapter 1 defines *discipline* as teaching autonomy and self-discipline while promoting self-esteem. Concepts introduced in Chapter 1 are more fully addressed throughout the book. Chapters 2 and 3 consider stages in children’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development as they relate to discipline problems and solutions. We build on this information throughout the rest of the book. We consider a clear definition of discipline and its goals, plus knowledge of child development, to be the basic understandings for a discussion of discipline.

Part B, Chapters 4–10, presents various approaches to discipline in descending order, from most positive to negative. This sequence can also be considered as an ascending order, from least intrusive to most intrusive. Chapter 4 discusses how to prevent behavior problems by creating an emotional and physical environment most supportive of children’s healthy development. Chapter 5 explains the role of developmentally appropriate programs in preventing discipline problems. Chapters 6 and 7 emphasize both the prevention of problems and intervention when problems do occur. Chapter 6 explains how the examples shown by adults influence child behavior, and shows how to help children use those examples during conflict situations. Chapter 7 presents effective ways to communicate with children, both to prevent conflict and to address problems that arise and how to negotiate solutions to existing problems. Chapter 8 explains how early childhood professionals can help children change unproductive behaviors by using related consequences to show children why certain behaviors are unacceptable. Chapter 9 analyzes behavior modification approaches, and explains why rewards and even praise are counterproductive to the goals of self-discipline. The dangers of punishment are presented in Chapter 10.

Chapters 11–15 constitute Part C, which builds on Parts A and B. Child development knowledge from Part A is used to determine the cause of behavior problems. Then knowledge about guidance approaches from Part B is used to select an appropriate response. Part C analyzes typical causes of discipline problems and relates them to the approaches relevant to each. These chapters emphasize the necessity of dealing with the cause of problems rather than just the symptoms. Chapter 11 discusses the relationship between maturational level and acceptable behavior, and Chapter 12 looks at how unmet needs cause problem behavior. Chapters 13 and 14 explore serious problems with causes outside of the classroom and offer helpful suggestions for the teacher or caregiver. Chapter 15 presents an overview of possible causes of discipline problems and identifies which causes pertain to a particular situation, and also provides a guide for matching the causes with the discipline approaches that are most likely to be effective for each.

## **PROVIDING EXAMPLES**

Because we want to balance theoretical explanations with real-life examples, we use typical scenarios to illustrate ways to facilitate self-discipline and moral autonomy through positive approaches to discipline. This method is congruent with our message that teachers must

not respond just to the behavior, but must consider the many factors that might relate to the cause of the behavior. These “stories” have proved extremely useful to college students trying to visualize the practical applications of text material, but who struggle with abstract concepts.

Meet the cast of characters: The staff at the Midway Children’s Center: The director, Susan; preschool teachers—Dennis, Gabrielle, Sheri, and Nancy; and infant/toddler teachers Keisha and Gabriella all provide examples of discipline with very young children. Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Sanchez, first-grade teacher Mrs. Jensen, second-grade teacher Mr. Davis and his student teacher Beth, and third-grade teacher Mrs. Garcia demonstrate the same concepts with primary-grade children. You also briefly encounter after-school-care teacher Ann and Alaska village teacher Mrs. Akaran. Mrs. Sanchez, Mrs. Jensen, and Mr. Davis represent all the caring and effective public school teachers we have known.

Because contrasting desirable with undesirable practices often helps us define the desirable, we have also provided examples of common practices that we do not recommend. For this purpose, we created two fictitious characters, preschool teacher Joanne and first-grade teacher Miss Wheeler, and described them in some real-life situations. Miss Wheeler is presented as teaching at the same elementary school as Mrs. Jensen. Joanne teaches at the same children’s center as Dennis, but she is in charge during the afternoon and Dennis is the lead teacher during the morning preschool session. Having Dennis and Joanne share the same students and support staff provides examples of how different approaches affect the same children. All teachers are fictional, but the good and bad situations described are real. We use first names for the childcare staff and last names for public school staff, not to imply more respect for the latter, but only as a reflection of common practice.

Examples from readers’ own experience are the most instructive. We believe that spending significant time with children, preferably enough to establish authentic relationships with them, is necessary for internalizing theories about guidance and discipline. We also believe that personal observation and experience are crucial to learning, whether in preschool or adulthood.

We use the term *teacher* throughout the book to refer to caregivers as well as other teachers. Any adults who guide children through their day are teaching them. We firmly believe that adults working with children in childcare must be as knowledgeable about child development as any other teachers. Because children are so profoundly influenced by the adults in their lives, it is essential that all teachers have a solid understanding of how to influence children in positive directions.

### **EXPANDED INSTRUCTOR’S MANUAL, POWERPOINT® SLIDES, AND TEST BANK**

An expanded *Instructor’s Manual* for this edition is located on the Pearson web site ([www.pearsonhighered.com/educator](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator)). Some of the instructor resources are from other college faculty who use this book to teach about guidance and discipline. This site also includes updated PowerPoint® slides emphasizing the most important concepts in each chapter, and a revised test bank. The test bank has been expanded to include a variety of question types and problem-solving situations. These are not test items requiring mere rote memory; they simulate actual classroom situations where problem solving is required for effective discipline. Even the multiple-choice questions require higher-level thinking. This approach to testing is congruent with a constructivist approach to education, allowing the college teacher to model the principles recommended.

# Acknowledgments

Continued thanks to Constance Kamii for her patience and guidance in my quest to better understand constructivism and moral autonomy. Thanks also to all the teachers whose classrooms I have visited and who have provided models of respectful and constructive discipline. These include Jennifer Thompson who wrote the letter to teachers in Chapter 5, Kathy Hanna, Chris Thomas, and Linda Torgerson, as well as my sister Deborah Grams. I have learned the most from children themselves, however. All the children in all the classrooms where I have spent time over the past several decades have helped me understand child development and guidance. Raising my own two sons also taught me a lot, and I must thank them for being the subjects of my longitudinal research. Now I have five grandchildren who are teaching me even more about child development.

I have greatly appreciated Patty Meritt's ideas and contributions to the sixth and seventh editions and have enjoyed working with her. It continues to be a joy to work with my daughter-in-law, Debby Fields, on this book. Our mutual interest in her children—my grandchildren—provides a personal perspective to our research. I am deeply indebted to those who allowed me to take children's photographs and who assisted with parental permission forms. Traci Sauvage and Danielle Delinno at St Annes's School in Seattle were especially helpful with photographs for this edition. As always, I appreciate the guidance of our editor, Julie Peters, and I am grateful for the hard work of Jon Theiss, the developmental editor; and Michelle Gardner, the project manager. Finally—as always—many, many thanks to my dear husband Don for his patience and support.

*Marjorie Fields*

It has been an honor and pleasure to work with both Debby and Marjorie. Sincere thanks to Pearson for asking me to be a reviewer and, as a result, deepest thanks to Marjorie for bringing me on as a coauthor. Marjorie's mentoring and insights into the world of early childhood go back long before this project; her patient guidance of me throughout my academic career as well as the writing of this textbook will never be forgotten. I am grateful to the Bunnell House Early Childhood Lab School for their continual support, including photo opportunities, and to Kelly Peissner, the EC administrative assistant. I appreciate my teachers, especially Bernice Clayton, who introduced me to the world of early childhood, and all the colleagues through the years who helped make my contributions possible. Loving thanks also to my husband Bob and our children and grandchildren, my inspiration.

*Patty Meritt*

I thank Marjorie Fields for her guidance, support, and confidence in me. She is truly a wonderful and caring teacher. I am so grateful for the opportunity to continue to learn from her and from the research and literature reviewed for this book. I also thank my husband, Mike, for his support and for being my partner in parenting. I continue to learn so much from my own two children, Sarah and Caroline, who remain my inspiration.

*Deborah M. Fields*

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# PART A

## *Discipline Foundations*

The first three chapters of this book provide the basic information necessary to study the topic of discipline. In Chapter 1, we describe discipline as discussed in this text, comparing the concept of Constructivist discipline with Behaviorist and Maturationist discipline.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on child development issues that directly affect discipline in preschools and primary grades. Understanding how children grow, learn, and think helps adults live more harmoniously with children. This understanding not only creates more tolerance for normal childish behaviors, but also reduces inappropriate adult expectations. We believe that effective discipline approaches must be based on knowledge of children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development, as well as on the individual characteristics of each child.





# Chapter 1

## Thinking About Guidance and Discipline



Source: Marjorie V. Fields

**D**iscipline is a major concern of most teachers. No matter what you are trying to teach, you need to have the attention and cooperation of your students. Not an easy task, especially if you are trying to make children sit still, be quiet, and pay attention to something they are not interested in. We hope this book will give you insights about how to make your work with children more pleasant, rewarding, and productive.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

With understanding of this chapter, you should be able to

- Differentiate between long-term guidance/discipline goals and short-term goals
- Compare and contrast Behaviorist, Constructivist, and Maturationist guidance/discipline models
- Summarize the main features of Constructivist guidance/discipline
- Analyze the cause of a behavior problem after careful observation

### NAEYC Standards Addressed in This Chapter

**Standard 3:** Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families

**Standard 4a:** Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of work with young children

**Standard 4c:** Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate teaching/learning approaches

**Standard 6b:** Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines

☞ Suppose you walk into a classroom where several children are isolated in time-out, the teacher is threatening others with punishment, and the atmosphere in the room is tense and uncomfortable. What has gone wrong here? How can this situation be turned around? This chapter begins the process of helping you find answers to those questions. ☞

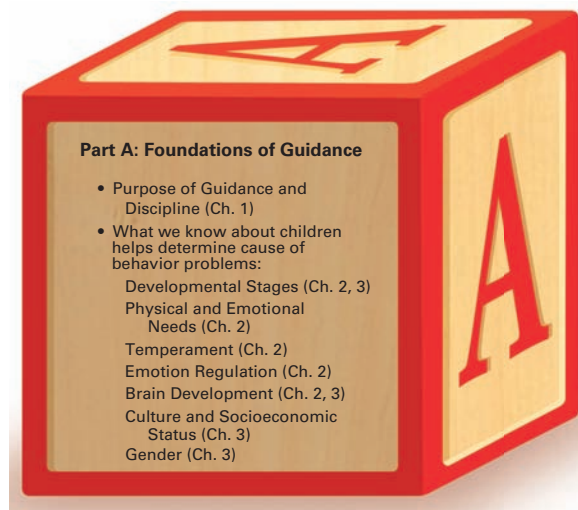
Some books tell you they have the perfect formula to solve all your discipline problems; this one doesn't. This book says there is no one approach to discipline that works for all problems, let alone for all children. Child guidance and discipline are incredibly complex, confusing, and frustrating. The many books and programs that offer simple solutions to discipline problems ignore the reality of individual differences, emotion-laden situations, and overburdened caregivers. In this book, we do not offer any simple solutions, but instead acknowledge that effective child discipline is multifaceted, requiring a sophisticated set of understandings and skills. Fixing the unhappy classroom described at the beginning of the chapter will not be a quick fix. We try to provide the basics understandings and skills for this and other discipline-related issues, but, ultimately, what you get out of reading this book is determined by what you put into it.

The three chapters in Part A of this book provide the foundation information for thinking about guidance and discipline (see the three-blocks structure in Part A introduction). This first chapter is intended to help you understand everything else in this book and give you our definitions for the terminology used throughout subsequent chapters. Ideally, as you read this chapter, you will have many questions and will use this book to help you find answers.

## DEFINING DISCIPLINE

Notice that the title of this book includes both **guidance** and **discipline**. The term *guidance* is usually associated with helping kids deal with problems (as in *guidance counselor*), and the term *discipline* is too often associated with punishing children for doing things adults don't like. As you read, you will see that the term *discipline* is used differently in this book, and that it includes what people generally think of as *guidance*, but it does not include punishment.

What do you think discipline is? Have you always thought of it as punishing a child for doing something wrong? Many people think that discipline is a smack on a child's bottom. You may have heard a (sick) joke that refers to a paddle as the "board of education." This book defines *discipline* differently: *helping children learn personal responsibility for their behavior and the ability to judge between right and wrong for themselves*. The emphasis is on teaching as we help kids learn responsible behaviors, rather than merely stopping unproductive actions. Instead of abandoning the term, we want to help people understand what the word *discipline* is supposed to mean. Did you know that the word *discipline* comes from the word *disciple*, which means "to lead and teach"? Teaching and leading are what adults should be doing when they discipline a child. With this view of discipline, undesirable behavior is an opportunity for instruction (Elkind, 2001). Do you think the teacher in the example at the beginning of this chapter understands that view of discipline?



Instead of just enforcing rules about what not to do, we want to help children learn to make wise choices about what they should do. Note that *learning to make wise choices for themselves* is very different from just doing whatever they want. We are not advocating a lack of behavior controls or permissive approaches. Instead, we are advocating approaches that help children understand why certain behaviors are better than others, and that help children choose to act in a desirable manner, whether or not an adult is there to “catch” them at it.

This text is about how to support children in becoming responsible, kind, and productive citizens; it is not about forcing or otherwise coercing children to behave in certain ways. We explain why we are convinced that external controls, such as reward and punishment, counteract the behavior and attitudes our society so desperately needs. We don’t just tell you not to reward or punish children; we also explain better ways of reaching behavior goals.

A key element in the process is determining the cause of undesirable behaviors and working to eliminate that cause. Our approach to discipline is like diagnostic teaching: individualized to the needs and abilities of each child. This type of guidance and discipline requires extensive knowledge of child development as well as of various guidance approaches. This book attempts to assist readers in obtaining the necessary knowledge in both areas; it then presents ways of using them together for child guidance.

Because we view discipline as teaching, not merely controlling, we recommend that school discipline be planned at least as carefully as other aspects of the curriculum. Schools long ago gave up punishing students for not knowing how to read or do a math problem. Instead of punishing children for missing skills and understandings, teachers now teach what is missing. This is the same process we advocate for helping children with missing social skills and for teaching them understandings related to behavior.

## High Stakes

Can we afford to spend school time teaching social skills and caring attitudes? Evidence shows that we can’t afford not to (Charney, 2002; Garrett, 2006). Although federal mandates have focused schools on academic testing, experienced teachers know that other areas of the curriculum won’t get covered if discipline is not taught appropriately (Willis, Dinehart, & Bliss, 2014). However, more important, observers of human nature and human development researchers (Damon, Lerner, & Eisenberg, 2006; Hanish et al., 2007) know that it doesn’t really matter what else people learn if they don’t learn to become caring, principled, and responsible; their lives will be lived in shambles. “Individuals do not develop into educated competent members of society by learning academic skills, absent of social skills” (Garrett, 2006, p. 154). In addition, it is becoming increasingly clear that schools must teach caring, communication, negotiation, and other violence-prevention lessons in an effort to make schools and neighborhoods safe.

Teachers report that classroom discipline is their biggest challenge (Willis et al., 2014). This challenge appears to be growing greater each year as increasingly more children arrive at school with unmet needs and insufficient social skills. Teachers struggle to create caring classroom communities with children who lack impulse control and have little ability to manage their frustration and anger (Brady, Forton, Porter, & Wood, 2010).

Teachers of young children must spend time on discipline not only in self-defense, but also because they have the children at the most opportune time. Brain research shows that the early years offer a critical window of opportunity for learning complex functions related to behavior, such as logical thinking and emotion regulation (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010). During the years from age 3 to age 10, the brain has more synapses creating connections to brain cells than at any other time. Brain imaging shows conclusively what early childhood teachers have said all along: The early years are the critical years for learning.

## THE GOALS OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline approaches must be determined by our goals. Start by asking yourself, “What is the purpose of discipline?” It may be tempting to look at discipline merely as a means to keep control so you can teach other things, but children and society need so much more.

### Long-Term Goals

Whenever you teach something, you need to start by clarifying your long-term educational goals. Teaching discipline or anything else without long-term goals is like trying to plan a trip route without knowing where you are headed. In order to examine long-term goals, you may find it useful to ask yourself what kind of people you value. Notice that the word is *people*, not *children*. Is there a difference? If you are thinking about children, you might be attracted to the goal *obedient*; however, you are not likely to choose that label for an adult characteristic. Keep in mind that early discipline influences character for a lifetime; therefore, it is essential to think about what kind of people function best in society rather than merely considering what kind of children are easiest to manage. What traits will make the best contribution to a democratic society?

---

#### Reflection

*How does it change your thinking about discipline when you talk about goals for a person instead of goals for a child?*

---



Watch this video of a teenage boy responding to the question of what he would do if he didn't have money to buy his mother a birthday present but then found a wallet with a lot of money in it. Would this response be your goal for guidance/discipline? As you read on, consider what type of guidance/discipline leads to this kind of thinking.

### Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Many people list *positive self-concept* as a goal, but this seems to confuse the difference between self-concept and **self-esteem**. *Self-concept* is an understanding of who we are and what we can do; *self-esteem* is how we feel about that. A realistic self-concept is essential to mental health (Landy, 2009) and can provide the basis for developing good self-esteem.

There is general agreement that we want kids to grow up feeling good about themselves. Although almost everyone voices this goal, many—like the teacher in the example at the beginning of this chapter—still use discipline methods that damage self-esteem. Children often aren't really listened to, and are routinely treated with much less respect than adults are; they are lectured, ignored, bullied, and bribed in ways no adult would ever put up with (McEvoy, 2014). Later chapters discuss how punishment and other coercive tactics—even praise and other rewards—can damage a person's self-esteem.

### Self-Discipline and Self-Regulation

Nearly everyone also agrees that **self-discipline** and **self-regulation** are goals for children. Most approaches to discipline describe themselves as promoting self-discipline (Brooks & Goldstein, 2007; Nelson, 2006), though the related term “self-regulation” is less known (Willis et al., 2014). Disagreements center on what leads to these goals. Some people believe that rewards for acceptable behavior and punishments for unacceptable behavior lead to



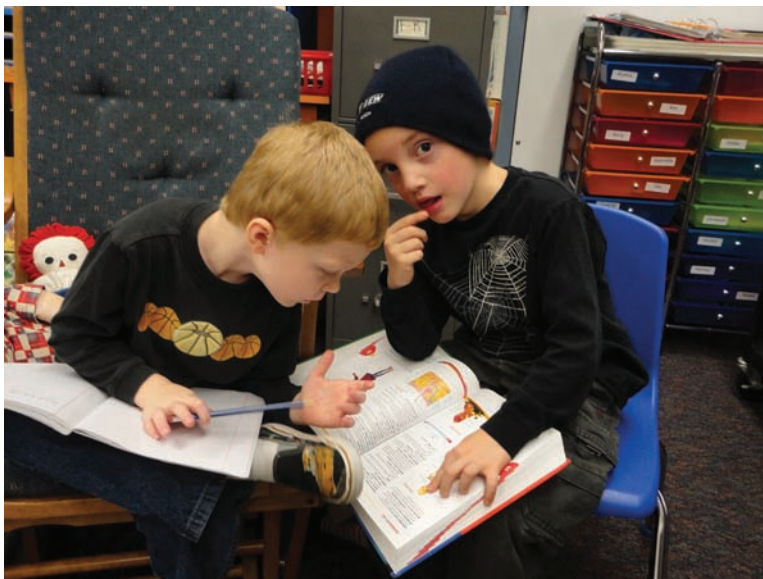
self-discipline. Such viewpoints do not recognize that being manipulated by reward and punishment is vastly different from learning about what is right and how to make wise and caring decisions (Kohn, 2005, 2011; Turiel, 2006). In contrast, this book is based on the view that children can't learn to regulate their own behavior as long as others are regulating it for them.

## Moral Autonomy

A more sophisticated and little-known version of self-discipline is called *moral autonomy*, a concept presented in Jean Piaget's classic book, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1932/1965), and elaborated for modern audiences by Piagetian scholars Rheta DeVries (e.g., DeVries & Zan, 2012) and Constance Kamii (e.g., Kamii & Ewing, 1996). According to these sources, *autonomy* means being governed and guided by your own beliefs and understandings. It is much more than merely "internalizing" a set of conduct rules and making yourself follow them. For instance, the morally autonomous person is kind to others out of personal feelings of respect for other human beings. The opposite is *heteronomy*, which means being governed or ruled by someone else. Heteronomous people are kind to others only if they think their behavior will be rewarded, or if they are afraid of being caught and punished for not being kind.

Some people misinterpret this concept and get worried when they hear about autonomy, thinking that being governed by yourself means doing whatever you want. However, Kamii (1982) points out that Piaget's theory of autonomy doesn't just mean the *right* to make decisions for yourself, but also the ability to make decisions for oneself about right and wrong, without consideration of reward or punishment. Kamii makes the point that a key component of moral autonomy involves taking all relevant factors into account. If you think about the meaning of that statement, you see that a merely self-serving decision would be excluded, because it wouldn't take into consideration the "relevant factors" of other people's needs. It is important to note that *being governed internally* also means that children are not so susceptible to peer pressure; therefore, morally autonomous persons do not join in inappropriate group activities in order to be accepted by their peers.

Thus, it is a person without moral autonomy who is likely to act irresponsibly when there are no external controls (Turiel, 2006). In fact, that description fits some young college



Source: Marjorie V Fields

*Moral autonomy means having the ability to make decisions about right and wrong, regardless of any rewards or punishments, yet taking into consideration the rights and needs of all involved.*

students away from home for the first time. College dormitory life testifies to the fact that some well-meaning families and teachers deny young people an adequate opportunity to develop inner controls. Inexperienced at self-regulating their work, play, and sleep, some first-year college students find themselves unable to achieve a workable balance. Some, whose behavior has been controlled through rewards and punishment, find themselves unable to make wise decisions when confronted with drugs and alcohol and away from adult control.

Autonomy does not mean lack of control; rather, it refers to the source of control. Autonomous people carry those controls within themselves. They are never without them, even when alone. Heteronomous persons, by contrast, experience control only when someone else is present. They depend on an external judge to reward or punish their behavior. When you help kids develop moral autonomy, you affect how they behave, even when misbehavior isn't likely to be caught (Weinstock, Assor, & Broide, 2009). Autonomous people don't need policing to keep them on the right path.

### Long-Term versus Quick-Fix Solutions

Are teachers responsible for keeping children safe and orderly and also for helping them develop positive self-esteem, self-discipline, and moral autonomy? That's a tall order! Don't forget that teachers have to teach, too. Can they really be blamed if they have a hard time thinking about long-range discipline goals and try to control only for the moment? After all, teachers usually have a student for just one year.

Families, however, are generally aware that they will be dealing with this child through the teen years and beyond. One mother reports that she was powerfully motivated to help her son Michael learn self-discipline when she thought about his getting a driver's license in 10 years. While Michael was little, she could protect him from harm by watching over him herself, but she doubted that she could ride along to make sure he was driving safely when he was 16. She knew that inner controls would stay with Michael long after she couldn't. Therefore, she focused on discipline approaches that fostered inner control rather than obedience. Nevertheless, parents are sometimes tired and stressed enough to ignore future outcomes and just try to force their kids to behave for the moment.

Teachers may be under the added pressure to present a "well-disciplined" class, in the old sense of appearing quiet and controlled. This can make a difference at evaluation time with principals or directors who don't understand how young children learn best. As a result, discipline methods aimed at quick, short-term results remain popular even though they may damage children's self-esteem and autonomy. Some of these quick-fix methods are discussed later in the text, when we discuss Behaviorism.

Fortunately, many teachers care too much about children to give in. They resist quick-fix approaches and work on positive alternatives. They know that helping children live together peacefully now and preparing them for the future are compatible goals. Skillful teachers, unlike the teacher in the example at the start of this chapter, know how to work toward long-term discipline goals while maintaining a peaceful and productive learning environment. They know they don't have to make a choice between protecting children's self-esteem and keeping order. With the guidance of these knowledgeable and dedicated teachers, children can learn from experience to make wise decisions. In the process, they can also develop the positive self-esteem and moral autonomy necessary for becoming competent, caring, loving, and lovable people (Noddings, 2005).



#### Check Your Understanding 1.1

Click here to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.



## DISCIPLINE MODELS COMPARED AND CONTRASTED

Common styles of discipline vary from the extreme power-on approach, in which the adult makes all the rules and punishes any deviation, to the hands-off approach, in which the child makes all the decisions. Too many people think they must choose one or the other of those models. One teacher says she plays the “heavy” until she can’t stand herself; then she switches to the opposite until she can’t stand the kids. Too few adults (teachers as well as parents) are even aware of any other options. We do not recommend trying to combine these two extremes in an attempt at a middle ground; there are alternatives that balance the power of adult and child. You don’t have to choose between either the adult or the child having all the power (Tzuo, 2007). A shared-power model best meets the needs of all. The needs and views of both the adult and the child can be accommodated when discipline is viewed as teaching.

Typically when comparing discipline styles, we read about Baumrind (1967, 1989) who identified and labeled three parenting styles: **authoritative**, **authoritarian**, and **permissive**. Respectively, these reflect a firm but warm approach to childrearing, a harshly firm approach, and a warm approach lacking in guidance. However, because we view discipline as *teaching*, we believe it makes sense to base guidance and discipline on learning theory rather than parenting styles. Therefore, we compare the guidance approaches according to which learning theory they most closely fit: **Behaviorist**, **Maturationist**, or **Constructivist**.

Whether you know it by that name or not, most of you are familiar with Behaviorism: the system of praise, rewards, and punishment so widely used in our schools. Rarely seen in schools, the Maturationist approach merely supports and does not intervene in children’s development and learning. We reject both of those in favor of Constructivism. Constructivist learning theory is not a “middle ground” between Behaviorism and Maturationism; rather, it is a whole different view of learning and of guidance and discipline. It is not a “nicer” way to get obedience; instead, it strives for much *more* than obedience. Constructivism helps children learn from their experiences and from thinking about those experiences (DeVries & Zan, 2012; Kamii & Ewing, 1996; Piaget, 1965). Through this process, the learner is assisted in gaining increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding. Thus, children gradually develop the ability to take many relevant factors into consideration when deciding what action is best for all concerned. The word *gradually* is important because it indicates the developmental basis for Constructivist teaching. Constructivists recognize that teaching young children involves accepting immature thinking and requires working in conjunction with maturation to help children move to greater understanding.

### Discipline Goals Compared

Each discipline style is based on the same motive: love or concern for the child. However, each has very different goals (Figure 1–1). Compliance is the target goal in Behaviorist models (Canter, 2010; Dobson, 2011). A Maturationist model overemphasizes individual freedom (Baumrind, 1967, 1989), although it can also be a result of neglect. The Constructivist model

Theory	Process	Goal
<b>Behaviorist</b>	Molds behavior via rewards and punishment	Obedience
<b>Constructivist</b>	Helps children learn from experience and reasoning	Moral autonomy
<b>Maturationist</b>	Believes time is the best teacher	Individual development

FIGURE 1–1 Goals of Three Theories of Discipline

works toward moral autonomy: self-determined and responsible behavior, showing concern for the good of others and for oneself as well (Kamii, 1984; Kohn, 2005). Rewards and punishment of Behaviorism are not compatible with these goals. The Constructivist approach acknowledges the complexity of the ever-changing world; therefore, it teaches children to think for themselves about desirable or undesirable actions rather than telling them predetermined answers to current dilemmas. Power-on approaches to discipline don't give children information that they can use to construct ideas of right and wrong (Smetana, 2006).

## Differences in Discipline Forms

Not surprisingly, each model uses very different forms of discipline. Punishment and reward are used heavily in the Behaviorist models (Canter, 2010). Lack of discipline is the distinguishing feature of the Maturationist model. In contrast to these two extremes, but definitely not a blend of them, the Constructivist model offers a multifaceted set of discipline options, explained in this book.

These Constructivist options focus on teaching and, like all good teaching, begin with good human relationships. Adults who are responsive, warm, and comforting are essential to children's healthy development (Gurian, 2011; Noddings, 2005). Good relationships between teachers and children do not mean the teacher tries to be a "pal." The Constructivist teacher is still the adult in charge, responsible for setting necessary limits and keeping children safe. However, this is done in a caring and respectful way. Mutually caring and respectful relationships with adults and peers encourage kids to think about the effects of their behavior on other people. Teaching children to think critically is an essential aspect of Constructivist teaching about discipline, and about other topics as well. Piagetian scholar David Elkind (2001, p. 7) therefore used the term *instructive discipline for the Constructivist model*. Constructivist discipline strategies are aimed at helping children construct socially productive behavior rules and values for themselves. The approach is aimed at helping children become better able to reason, and thus become more reasonable human beings.



Watch this video of young children fighting over toys and think about the different guidance/discipline theories described here. What would an adult do using the Maturationist theory? What type of intervention could come with the Behaviorist theory? How might a Constructivist teacher react?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1x7tRFhZMTc>

## Differences in Results

What are the results of the different discipline models? We can never be certain about research findings concerning human beings because we cannot ethically control the variables in a person's life. Each person is a unique blend of genetics, family dynamics, societal influences, and individual experiences. However, certain trends occur frequently enough to suggest a relationship. Behaviorist models are associated with anger and depression, as well as low self-esteem and the inability to make self-directed choices (e.g., Knafo & Plomin, 2006; Landy, 2009; Thompson & Newton, 2010). Kohn (2011) explains that controlling kids through rewards or praise keeps them from learning to regulate themselves. Children raised in an overly permissive manner usually demonstrate low self-esteem and difficulty getting along with others. The Constructivist, or shared-power, model results in high self-esteem, good social skills, general competence, and self-discipline (DeVries, 1999; Kohn, 2005, 2011; Tzuo, 2007).

Constructivist discipline approaches help most children quickly learn to negotiate solutions to problems, to resolve their own conflicts, and to self-direct their learning activity (DeVries & Zan,