

## All about Consequences

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Let's cut immediately to the chase in this short article:

Everyone wants to raise responsible children. Some parents manage to do it, some don't. What's the difference?

*Responsibility only happens when a child is taught consequences* by loving and accepting parents – parents who emphasize that making good decisions brings good results and that poor decisions bring predictable unhappy results. Wise parents ensure that the outcomes for a child's decisions affect the child *primarily and directly*. If a temper tantrum in a store ultimately affects only the mom, then temper tantrums will have no end.

When parents vibrate anger around a child's mistake they show that the mistake is affecting them, not primarily the child.

- ✓ When parents take the credit for a child's achievement, then the child's good decisions are owned by the parents.
- ✓ So, putting it simply, wise parents ensure the child's ownership of good and poor choices by use of positive and negative consequences that affect the child directly.

### Parental Statements Are a Positive Consequence:

- ✓ "Wow, I bet you are happy about the way that turned out!"
- ✓ "Well, good for you!"
- ✓ "I bet you are pretty proud of yourself."
- ✓ Parents vibrate out, "I feel just great being around you!"
- ✓ A positive consequence is NOT a bribe. Giving an employee a bonus for a great year is not a bribe. Taking a child to a movie after he cleans the garage is not a bribe if the parent feels good and not *obligated* to do so. A reward is a gift given with joy. A bribe is given with resentment because it is, for better or worse, *owed*.

So the difference between a bribe and a reward is shown in the *attitude of the giver and receiver*.

Bribe: "If you don't pay me for good grades, I won't earn them."

Reward: "Wow, you got 4 A's?!" I hope you don't mind if I give you \$10.00 for every A. I feel so good about having a kid like you around. And generally, people who do an outstanding job end up with more cash anyway, if they live in a merit based world."

"Gee, *thanks, Mom!*"

When given a *reward*, folks always responds with "Thanks." When offered a bribe, a child (or citizen) always responds, "You need to give me more."

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Negative Consequences:

When a child makes poor choices and things turn out poorly, the wise parent raising responsible children allows natural consequences to fall. This may result in children suffering or hurting and the parent helps the child grow by encouraging coping skills rather than protectively removing the source of pain. When things go poorly, parents provide the two great E's of Love and Logic: *encouragement* and *empathy*. Parents can also give thoughts and ideas about how the child might problem-solve. The overview then can be summed by the parental response:

“Gee, honey, too bad for *you*. I’m sure a kid like you can cope with this. If any kid can handle this, you can! How can I be of help to *you*? Would you like to hear how some kids handle situations like this?”

*A negative consequence is not a punishment.*

Punishments are designed *to ensure a child feels bad*. Consequences *allow the child to feel bad*, but the emphasis is on empathy and encouragement for the child to make new and different decisions in the future.