

Why are Discipline Rules Necessary?

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If discipline rules help the behavior of human beings, can discipline be taught by training the behavior? It is justified if we think there have been some discipline rules in human history because all human beings like to maintain discipline rules for themselves and the wellness of society. That's why there are different discipline rules among different ethnicities and religions worldwide for good behavior among people. On the other hand, behavior is something that could be taught as well. It has been proved by psychology in the middle period of psychology in history. It is called the behaviorism school of psychology.

This school of behaviorism was introduced by psychologist J. B. Watson, an American. He was helped by other schools commenced by a few psychologists, like Edward Lee Thorndike, Ivan Pavlov, and Burrhus Frederic Skinner. My favorite scientist is the famous Ivan Pavlov, the Russian scientist, and Nobel prize winner because he did some experiments to investigate animal behavior and human nature. For this experiment, he used some dogs to explore their behavior according to the conditioning theory. First, He studied how a dog responds if given a conditioning or stimulus. It is called Classical Conditioning. At the same time, he tested the unconditioned stimulus or natural stimulus vs unconditioned or natural stimulus and conditioned or moderate stimulus vs conditioned stimulus or learned response.

He immediately presented the food to the dog to stimulate a new condition and rang a bell simultaneously. After several conditioning trials, Pavlov noted that the dog salivates after hearing the bell while reaching for food. For the next experiment, he rang the bell without providing any food, but the dog's response was the same: the dog responded by salivating for food. So, they realized the dog had learned a new habit pattern. That's made a new theory that the dog learns a new habit or a new learning by a conditioned or medium stimulus. But B.F. Skinner, an American psychologist and social philosopher, has introduced another theory to investigate the behavior of animals. He used the operant condition theory.

According to this operant conditioning, strengths and behavior can be increased by

giving reinforcement to a relevant person. For example, if we talk about only positive reinforcement, one could be given positive reinforcement to increase strength or behavior. As psychology educator and psychosocial rehabilitation specialist Kendra Cherry explains, “Positive reinforcers are favorable events or outcomes presented after the behavior”. In positive reinforcement situations, a response or behavior is strengthened by adding praise or a direct reward. If you do an excellent job at work and your manager gives you a bonus, that bonus is a positive reinforcer.” Operant conditioning teaches about reinforcement and punishment for behavior. Therefore, there are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment. In connection with this operant condition school, B. F. Skinner used a box named ‘Skinner Box’ for his experiments in his laboratory, using pigeons and rats. So, it is said, “When the lab rat presses the lever when a green light is on, it receives food and a pellet as a reward. It receives a mild electric shock when it presses the lever when a red light is on. As a result, they learn to press the lever when the green light is on and avoid the red light.” Therefore, there are two types of reinforcement: positive and negative. Positive reinforcement strengthens the response or behavior by adding praise or a direct reward. For example, if you fulfill your job well, the manager gives you a bonus, which is positive reinforcement. According to that theory, shouldn’t we do our duties well to gain well-being? It is said that animals could be taught using Classical Conditioning and Operant Conditioning, but can humans be taught easily like that?

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For instance, we can understand it by watching how many people are crossing using the pedestrian crossing on the White Line. Therefore, many discipline rules have been imposed on humans rather than animals to control them. We can see that different societies have set different rules worldwide. They may be, sometimes, political rules, religious rules, social and cultural rules, or rules in some schools or institutions. There was such an occasion on Navam Pōya Day at Pūrwarāmaya Temple in Sāwatthi, India. After 20 years of Enlightenment, the Buddha was invited by monks to impose discipline rules on monks for their sake. After being requested three consecutive times by monks, the Buddha agreed, and then the Buddha asked all Bhikkhus to gather in one place. It was the biggest congregation of that era in India; 1,250 senior monks participated. After a bit of discussion addressing the

gathering, the Buddha requested the monks to abide by all Vinaya rules. Until that day, the Buddha used to remember the rules for Bhikkhu, but from this day, he has requested Bhikkhus to comply with the rules by themselves. According to Vinaya (discipline rules), there are 220 Vinaya rules for Bhikkhus and 304 rules for Bhikkhunis. Is it easy? The Buddha has permitted us to change some minimal discipline rules as occasion calls for it. Besides that, His primary teaching was: “To avoid evil. To accumulate merit and to cleanse one’s mind. This is the advice of (all the) Buddhas.”

Today, some psychologists also teach how to cleanse the mind and keep the mind calm and healthy when an individual experiences a mental disorder. For this purpose, they teach Mindfulness Meditation to their clients, not only to manage mental disorders but for many mental illnesses as well. In addition, if you maintain mindfulness, you can easily cross the road and drive well without getting in trouble. Most of the problems in the world may be a lack of following relevant discipline rules and mindfulness. According to my teaching experience, mindfulness with discipline helps keep a good mindset, get a good education, do a good job, and do other day-to-day work. It would be beneficial to abide by the relevant Vinaya or discipline rules to maintain a calm mind and create a good society. Therefore, aren’t discipline rules necessary?

Ven Diyapattugama Revatha Thero

(B.A., M.A., M.Phil.)

Expert Psychological Counselor and

Meditation Instructor

Siriwardhanarama Buddha Dhamma College

Mano`daya Meditation Center

Siriwardhanaramaya, Temple Lane, Kollupitiya

sirirevathad@gmail.com

dhammavedi.com



Ven Diypattugama Revatha Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Siriwardhanaramaya Temple, Kollupitiya.