

A Fresh Look at Discipline
By Jeanne Loehnis

Does the very word discipline make you cringe? Do visions of childhood rules and limits set by your parents and teachers fill your mind? Are you quick to state that life is too full and too chaotic to consider the forced routine implied by discipline? A quick look at Webster's and discipline reads like this:

“training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; control gained by enforcing obedience or order; a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity”

Discipline seems to be guidance from the outside, perhaps forced upon us and not chosen by us. Okay, cringing allowed!

But what if we added “self”? What is self-discipline?

“correction or regulation of oneself for the sake of improvement”

I heard you! Quickly you ran through the last 10 times you attempted a new exercise regime or diet. Maybe it was the discipline of setting time aside for yourself each day that fell through the cracks as soon as you heard, “Mommy, will you help me?” or “I need to get to practice. Can we leave now?” Perhaps it was “There is no time to cook. We'll get fast food.” For some of you, what you most need is rest yet the discipline of a regular bedtime before midnight eludes you. Why is everything and everyone else more important?

Let's dare to ask some new questions:

- What do I stand to gain by practicing self-discipline around *you-name-the-thing*?
- What will my family gain by me taking better care of me?
- If children (and we are all children) learn by example, what example do I want to set with my life?

If your answers convinced you that practicing some self-discipline would be worthwhile, try these on:

- What will I choose to release?
- What habit will I offer in trade for this new one?
- What am I unwilling to face by incorporating some healthy self-discipline into my routine?

Yes, there is a trade-off! In order to make room for the new, there must be a letting go. And letting go might come with a projection that someone else will feel disappointment when you don't participate or anger when you honor yourself and say no to them. It may

also feel like loss – loss of some comforting activity or food, loss of a half hour’s sleep to get up early, loss of time with the family in front of the TV.

And daring to practice the new discipline for 21 days or more likely means you will have to face feeling different, having more self-confidence, more self-esteem. You might even find that you value yourself more and need to add another self-loving habit to your days. Are you willing to face this dreaded consequence? Let’s see just how dreadful it is.

Imagine, for a moment, the 21-day trial period is over. You have been taking that first-thing-in-the-morning walk without fail. It has become easy to do this for yourself before anything else. You come in each day after your walk smiling and feeling energized. You reach out in joy to each family member or get ready for work with a spring in your step. You feel better, more alive, and others are reaping the benefits of your self-care. Are you willing to face this *dreaded* consequence?

Are you willing to risk living another day without healthy, self-honoring, self-discipline?

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Tend Your Garden

*In the Springtime, plant a garden of God's love.
In your soul may it bloom and grow may God's light glow from within.*

*May seeds of God’s love and God’s joy no longer wait in vain.
Always in each one of us does God abide.
Begin now in earnest to clear away old pain.
Give Love the room to bloom within your soul.*

*Tend your garden. Nourish freely with patience.
Let the showers of God's sweet love rain from above on your soul.*

*Rain on your garden of goodness and happiness and peace.
Ever to strengthen the roots of God's great love.
Provide Love a haven, calm, and safe and free.
Soon you will know the blossom of your soul.*

*From your garden, reap a harvest of plenty.
Gather blessings of joy and peace which will increase as you share.*

*As you share kindness and patience and tolerance for all.
All those who God loves and calls His very own.
The gifts that God gave you were planted to grow
and to become sweet food for other souls.*