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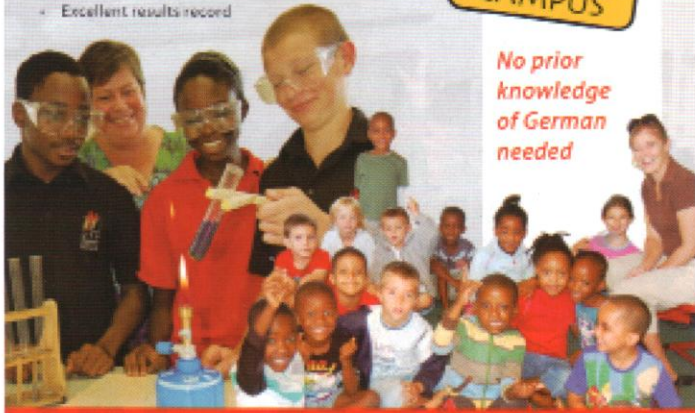
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Straight Talk...

by Maureen Collins

Maureen has a B Sc degree in Psychology from Edinburgh University. Maureen's passion is for showing people how to improve the quality of their conversations even under the most difficult conditions.

www.straight-talk.co.za

Obedience or discipline

Once upon a time, the rules for child rearing went along the lines of 'Be seen but not heard' and 'Do as I say; not as I do'. Children learned to be obedient. Rules of behaviour were strict and punishment was meted out to those who broke them.

Parents enforced discipline based on their power and authority. When you have power you can reward people who obey you and punish those who do not. Your authority comes from your status or position and from your competence and abilities.

When you use power and authority to enforce obedience, you develop relationships based on compliance. Children learn not to speak up and to do what they are told. If you are older than about 40 years of age this is the kind of relationship you probably had with your own parents.

In society today, power and authority are losing their

effectiveness as means of influencing behaviour, and relationships based on obedience are becoming less acceptable. Children can often claim more authority than their parents, certainly when it comes to computer technology, and they have expectations that their preferences, views and competencies will be considered in decisions that affect them.

Instead of learning obedience, children today need help in developing the self discipline to make choices about their own behaviour. Instead of advice, they need to learn how to evaluate alternative courses of action. Instead of instructions, they need constructive feedback on the impact of their behaviour.

The development of children into adults today involves as much learning for their parents as it does for the children: but the reward for both is the development of relationships based on mutual respect.

