Clay Trumbull's Hints on Child Training is one of the BEST books I have ever read on how to raise children. I have shared this book with friends who are currently raising children and they gave very positive reviews. I also had my class in the Seminary on spirituality read Trumbull's Hints on Child Training and they said it was wonderful. One student, in fact, said he never read such books so his wife began reading it and convinced him to also read it. As a result, he said his view of raising his children completely changed. Clay Trumbull is amazingly practical and you will find yourself agreeing and wondering why you hadn't already read the admonitions somewhere else. I was fortunate to find an original copy of the book which will allow me to slowly add the rest of the chapters of this wonderful book. This is the fifth chapter of his book. God bless in your reading!

The measure of will-power is the measure of personal power, with a child as with an adult. The possession or the lack of will-power is the possession or the lack of personal power, in every individual’s sphere of life and being. The right or the wrong use of will-power is the right or the wrong exercise of an individual’s truest personality. Hence the careful guarding and the wise guiding of a child’s will should be counted among the foremost duties of one who is responsible for a child’s training.

Will-training is an important element in child-training; but will-breaking has no part or place in the training of a child. A broken will is worth as much in its sphere as a broken bow; just that, and no more. A child with a broken will is not so well furnished for the struggle of life as a child with only one arm, or one leg, or one eye. Such a child has no power of strong personality, or of high achievement in the world. Every child ought to be trained to conform his will to the demands of duty; but that is bending his will, not breaking it. Breaking a child’s will is never in order.

The term “will” as here employed applies to the child’s faculty of choosing or deciding between two courses of action. Breaking a child’s will is bringing the pressure of external force directly upon that will, and causing the will to give way under the pressure of that force. Training a child’s will is bringing such influences to bear upon the child that he is ready to choose or decide in favor of the right course of action.

To break a child’s will is to crush out for the time being, and so far to destroy, the child’s privilege of free choice; it is to force him to an action against his choice, instead of inducing him to choose in the right direction. A child’s will is his truest personality; the expression of his will in a free choice is the highest expression of his personality. And a child’s personality is to be held
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sacred by God's representative who is over the child, even as God himself holds sacred the personality of every human being created in the image of God.

God never says unqualifiedly to a human being, “You shall not exercise your faculty of choice between the way of life and the way of death; you shall walk in the way which I know to be best for you.” But, on the contrary, God says to every one (Deut. 30: 15): “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil,”-for thy choice. Here, as everywhere, God concedes to man the privilege of exercising his will-power in the direction of life and good, or of death and evil. The strictest Calvinist and the broadest Arminian are at one in their opinion so far. Whatever emphasis is laid, in their philosophy, on God's influencing or enabling the human will to its final choice, neither of them disputes the fact that man is actually permitted to use that will in the direction of his choice. “It is God that worketh in man to will and to work for His good pleasure.” It is not that God worketh above man to crush out man's faculty of willing whether to act for or against His good pleasure. In other words, God has foreordained that every man shall have the freedom of his will-and take the consequences.

It is true that God holds out before man, as an inducement to him in his choosing, the inevitable results of his choice. If he chooses good, life comes with it. If he chooses evil, death is its accompaniment. The rewards and the punishments are declared in advance; but after all, and in spite of all, the choice is man's own. And every soul shall have eternally the destiny of its own choosing. The representative of God clothed with power, as he stood before the people of Israel, did not say, “You shall choose God’s service now; and if you deliberately refuse to do so, God will break your will so that you do, do it;” but he said, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Josh. 24: 15).

As God, our wise and loving Father in heaven, deals with us his children, so we, as earthly fathers, should deal with our children. We should guard sacredly their privilege of personal choice; and while using every proper means to induce them to choose aright, we should never, never, never force their choice, even into the direction of our intelligent preference for them. The final responsibility of a choice and of its consequences rests with the child, and not with the parent.

A child's will ought to be strong for right-doing. If it be not so at the start, it is the parent's duty to guide, or train, it accordingly. But to break, or crush, a child's will, is inconsistent with the educating and training of that will. A conflict between a parent and a child, where the only question is, Whose will shall yield to the other? is, after all, neither more nor less than a conflict of brute force.

Whether, in any instance, the will of the parent be set on having his child commit some repulsive crime against which the child's moral nature recoils, or whether the will of the parent be set on the child's reciting a Bible text or saying a prayer, the mere conflict of wills as a conflict of wills is a conflict of brute force; and in such a conflict neither party ought to succeed,-for success in any such case is always a failure. If the parent really wills that the child shall do right, the parent's endeavor should be to have the child will in the same direction. Merely to force one will into subjection to the other is, however, an injury both to the one who forces and to the one who submits.
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A hypothetical illustration may make this matter clearer. A father says to his strong-willed child: “Johnny, shut that door.” Johnny says, “I won’t.” The father says, “You shall.” Johnny rejoins, “I won’t.” An issue is here made between two wills—the father’s and the son’s. Many a parent would suppose that in such a case the child’s will ought to be broken, subjugated, forced, if need be, under the pressure of the father’s will; and the more conscientious the parent, the firmer is likely to be his conviction of duty accordingly.

It is at such a point as this that the evil of breaking a child’s will, instead of training it, finds its foothold in many a Christian home. The father is determined not to yield his will to his child’s will. The child is determined not to yield his will to his father’s will. It is the old conflict between “an irresistible force and an immovable body.” In such a case, brute force may compel the child to do that which he chooses not to do, just as the rack and thumb-screws of the Inquisition could compel the tortured one to deny a belief which he chooses to adhere to; but in the one case, as in the other, the victim of the torturing pressure is permanently harmed, while the cause of truth and right has been in no sense the gainer by the triumph. Oh, what if God should treat his children in that way!

What, then, it may be asked, should be done with such a child in an issue like this? It certainly would have been better, it would have been far better, for the parent not to make a direct issue by following the child’s first refusal with the unqualified declaration, “You shall.” But with the issue once made, however unfortunately, then what? Let the parent turn to the child in loving gentleness,—not then in severity, and never, never, never in anger,—and tell him tenderly of a better way than that which he is pursuing, urging him to a wiser, nobler choice. In most cases the very absence of any show of angry conflict on the father’s part will prompt the child to choose to do that which he said he would not do. But if worst comes to worst (for we are here taking the extremest supposable issue, which ought indeed rarely, if ever, to occur), let the parent say to the child: “Johnny, I shall have to give you your choice in this matter. You can either shut that door or take a whipping.” Then a new choice is before the boy, and his will is free and unbroken for its meeting.

Be it understood, the father has no right to say, “I will whip you until you shut that door;” for that would be to deprive the boy of a choice, to deprive the boy of his will-power in the direction of his action: and that no parent is ever justified in doing. If the boy chooses to be whipped rather than to obey, the father must accept the result so far, and begin again for the next time; although, of course, there must be no undue severity in a child’s punishment; even the civil law forbids that. The father as a father is not entitled to have his will stand in the place of his child’s will; even though he is privileged to strive to bring the child to will in the same direction that the father’s will trends.

All the way along through his training-life, a child ought to know what are to be the legitimate consequences of his chosen action, in every case, and then be privileged to choose accordingly. There is a place for punishment in a child’s training, but punishment is a penalty attached to a choice; it is not brute force applied to compel action against choice. No child ought ever to be punished, unless he understood, when he chose to do the wrong in question, that he was thereby incurring the penalty of that punishment.
In most cases it is better, as has been said, for a parent to avoid a direct issue with a child, than to seek, or even than to recognize and meet, an issue. And in the endeavor to train a child’s will, there is often a gain in giving the child an alternative consequence of obedience or disobedience. That is God’s way of holding out rewards and punishments. For example, a wise young mother was just giving her little boy a bit of candy which was peculiarly prized by him, when, in speaking to a lady visitor he called her by the familiar term used by older members of the family in addressing her. The mother reminded him of the manner in which he should speak to the lady. He refused to conform to this. “Then I cannot let you have this candy,” said the mother. “All right,” was the wilful reply. “I’d rather go without the candy than call her what you tell me to.” The mother turned quietly away, taking the candy with her. An hour later that child came to his mother, saying, “Mamma, perhaps you can give me that candy now; for I will always call that lady just what you tell me to.” A few added words from the mother at that juncture settled that point for all time. Thenceforward the child did as he had thus been led to will to do. His will had not been broken, but it had been newly directed by judicious training.

But, it may be asked, if a child be told by his mother to leave the room, at a time when it is peculiarly important that he should not remain there, and he says that he will not go, what shall be done with him? Shall he be permitted to have his own way, against his own true welfare? If the chief point be to get him out of the room, and there is no time just then for his training, the child can be carried out by main strength. But that neither breaks nor trains the child's will. It is not a triumph of will, but of muscle. The child, in such a case, leaves the room against his will, and in spite of it. His will has simply been ignored, not broken. And there are times when a child's bodily removal from one place to another is more important for the time being than is, just then, the child's will-training. Such would be the case if the house were on fire, or if the child were taken suddenly ill. But that is apart from the question of will-training or will-breaking. The distinction here noted ought not to be lost sight of in considering this question.

If, however, in the case above cited, the purpose of the mother be to meet the issue which is there raised, and to have it settled once for all whose will shall triumph, right or wrong, the mother can bring the pressure of brute force to bear on the child’s will, in order to its final breaking. Under that pressure, the child’s may go out before his will is broken. In many an instance of that sort, this has been the result. Or, again, the child’s will may then be broken. If it be so, the child is harmed for life; and so is his mother. The one has come into a slavish submission to the conscientiously tyrannical demands of the other. Both have obtained wrong conceptions of parental authority, wrong conceptions of filial obedience, and wrong conceptions of the plan and methods of the Divine-Paternal government. But if, on the use his own will aright, at the summons of one who is older and wiser than himself, and who is over him in the plan of God for his guidance and training, there is a better way than either the forcing a child out of the room against his will, or the breaking of his will so that that will is powerless to prompt him to stay or to go.

The course to be pursued in this case is that already suggested in the case of the child whose father told him to shut the door. Let the mother give herself, at once, to firm and gentle endeavors to bring that child to use his own will, freely and gladly, in the direction of her commands to him. If necessary, let there be no more of sleeping or eating in that home until that child, under the forceful pressure of wise counsel and of affectionate entreaty, has willed to be
an obedient child. Here, again, is the difference between the wise training of the will, and the always unwise and unjustifiable breaking of the will.

Even in the matter of dealing with the lower animals, it has been found that the old idea of “breaking” the will as a substitute for, or as a necessary precedent of, the “training” the will, is an erroneous one; and the remarkable power of such horse-trainers as Rarey and Gleason grows out of the fact that they are trainers, and not breakers, of horses. A standard work on Dog Training, by S. T. Hammond, is based on the idea, indicated in one of its titles, of “Training versus Breaking.” It might seem, indeed, that the counsel of this latter writer, concerning the wise treatment of a young dog taken newly in hand for his training, were given to a parent concerning the wise treatment of a young child when first taken in hand for this purpose.

“Do not fail to abundantly caress him and speak kindly words,” he says ; “and never under ay circumstances, no matter what the provocation. allow yourself to scold, or [in this early stage] strike him, as this is entirely at variance with our system, and is sure to result in the defeat of our plans. . . . Be very gentle with him at all times. Carefully study his disposition, and learn all of his ways, that you may the more readily understand just how to manage him. You should be in perfect sympathy with him, and humor all his whims and notions, and endeavor to teach him that you truly love him. In a short time you will find that this love will be returned tenfold, and that he is ever anxiously watching for your coming, and never so happy as when in your presence and enjoying your caresses.” This, be it borne in mind, is in a line of work that seeks to bring the entire will of the trained in loving subjection to the will of the trainer. And that which is none too high a standard for a young dog ought not to be deemed too high for attainment by a rational child.

Surely that which is found to be the best way for a trainer of dogs on the one hand, and which, on other hand, is God’s way with all his children, may fairly be recognized as both practicable and for a human parent’s dealing- with his intelligent little ones. And all this is written by one who in well-nigh forty years of parental life has tried more than one way in child-training, and who long ago learned by experience as well as by study that God’s way in this thing is unmistakably the best way.

This is chapter 5 of Clay Trumbull's Hints on Child-Training, published in 1891 by John D. Wattles of Philadelphia.

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