

I Punished Myself

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Essay Type: Personal Narrative

Like most people, I was a bit rebellious as a child. I was no stranger to a switch or belt. The funny thing is, I could have avoided every spanking if I chose to. My parents gave me plenty of choices: “Get off that table or I’m going to spank you! Stop hitting your brother or your gonna get a whipping!” It never really occurred to me that my future was in my own hands; I could choose to obey my parents or suffer the consequences. I was going to Kindergarten at Lone Star Elementary the first time I recall acting as my own brutal disciplinarian.

The classroom was big and open with a row of windows along the far wall. I caught a whiff of animal crackers and finger paint every time I entered the room. My desk was in the back of the room, close to my teacher’s desk. Her name was Mrs. Brown. She was tall, with blonde, wavy hair and a big smile. The classroom was full of children. I was new at Lone Star, so I didn’t have many friends. I wanted to fit in, so I quickly caught on to the current trends.

One of the trends happened to be an unusual way of sitting in our desks. The desks were small in order to fit our young bodies. They had blue plastic seats with a space separating the back of the chair from the seat of the chair, connected with metal bars on each side. We would slip our tiny legs through the back of the desks and kneel on the soft gray carpet while we did our worksheets in the seats of our desks. Soon, we got our first warning from Mrs. Brown.

Of course, in a class full of six-year-olds, her first warning wasn’t the last. Looking back, I must have been pretty brave to continue to disobey her, considering that my desk was right next to hers, and there was no way to hide as I sat like a pretzel in my desk. I liked my teacher, and I

don't remember being intimidated by her at all. Perhaps things would have turned out better for me if I had feared her a little more. Instead, I learned the hard way.

I was back in the awkward position, busy completing a worksheet. Mrs. Brown was speaking to another teacher, and I remember thinking that I had better sit up straight before she notices and I get into real trouble. I started to upright myself when, all of a sudden, there was resistance. My bony butt has slipped through the opening with ease, but now it seemed my hips had miraculously grown. The fear slowly gripped me as I realized I was stuck! I tried to free myself without drawing any attention, while my own tension grew like a storm in the pit of my stomach. I looked up at Mrs. Brown, hoping that the teacher would occupy her long enough for me to force myself out.

Minutes later, it dawned on me that not only would she notice, but also that I would have to humble myself and ask her for help. I waited for the other teacher to exit before quietly calling her over to my self-made trap. She saw the disturbed look on my face and probably didn't know whether to scold me or comfort me. I whispered timidly, "Mrs. Brown, I'm stuck."

"You can't be that stuck," she said in disbelief. Not realizing the severity of the situation, she tried to pull me out. To our dismay, we had no such luck.

Then, the true humiliation began as she helped me lift the desk, my skinny torso temporarily attached, and walked me to the bathroom. My cheeks flooded with hot crimson as the class watched my extra extremity and me leave the room. I avoided eye contact with my fellow classmates and heard snickering as I escaped. Mrs. Brown saw the humor in it and tried to hold back her own chuckles as she assisted me out. Finally, we reached the privacy of the little girls' room.

First, we tried to slide my jeans off my waist slightly. It wasn't enough. Next came the Vaseline. My teacher rubbed the circumference of my waist with the greasy mess. Not only was it unpleasant, but it also didn't work. My young mind was already assuming the worst. I would be stuck in this cumbersome desk for all eternity! The price for my disobedience just wasn't adding up this time.

Thankfully, Mrs. Brown had another plan. She enlisted the help of the school janitor. I said little to nothing as my embarrassment mounted. Mrs. Brown just smiled as if it was no big deal and it would all be over soon. I saw the janitor walking toward me down the long wide hall. To my surprise, he had a hacksaw in his hand. The new plan was to saw me out of the chair. By now, all I wanted was to get out of this unconventional prison that I had created for myself; I didn't care by what means. The janitor was a knight in shining armor as he sawed me out with care, and I was more than grateful.

Unfortunately, I now had the pleasure of facing my unsympathetic classmates. Their laughter was unabridged, and I tried to appear unscathed by joining in. The blow to my pride was an unrelenting hammer. No delegated authority administered the discipline, but it was administered just the same. I chose the consequences offered instead of the safer path of obedience.

Now, sixteen years later, I am finally seeing that the excitement offered by self-gratification is not always worth the repercussions that accompany it. Obedience to delegated authority and direct authority brings a measure of protection. Perhaps it is wise to obey without fully understanding why, and maybe the understanding comes after the wisdom of obedience. When I come to my next split in the road, I think I will chose the narrower path as directed in Proverbs 3:11-13, "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be

discouraged when He corrects you. For the Lord corrects those He loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights. Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding.”

Ms. Cutrer's Comments: *This assignment was a narrative/descriptive paper. Amanda chose an incident from her childhood in which a lesson was learned. The humor makes it all the more enjoyable to read.*