

Why Isn't the Same Discipline Working?

Your two children act alike, yet the discipline that works for one does not work for the other. **What is going on?** Instead of becoming more irritated, take a look at their drawings, coloring, scribbles, doodles, and handwriting. From the age of two years old throughout adulthood we can better understand the type of discipline they will need. Knowing this helps create trust, respect, and healthy rapport in later years.

Below is a scribble of a three-year girl, Ellen. You will notice that it is comprised of mostly circles and soft, wavy shapes. While playing in the yard she once threw a rock toward her mother who was standing in the driveway. Her mother said, "*Ellen, that hurt mommy's heart*" (as she patted her heart and frowned). Ellen was so upset that she cried; that was the first and only rock Ellen ever threw. Lesson learned.



Children who scribble, doodle, draw, etc. with mostly soft, rounded or wavy shapes will most always handwrite in soft, round shapes as well. Think about some of the most gentle, caring individuals you know (ie: elementary school teachers, hospice, social work, nursing, and with animals). You will notice this style of writing is very typical.

Below is Ellen's current writing; she is currently 15 years old. Notice that her writing has round, soft shapes which shows she is someone who reacts emotionally to people and situations. So as a child, spouse, or employee, she needs discipline and constructive criticism that appeals to her emotional side. She needs to *feel* the issue and empathize or sympathize with the outcome.

my name is Ellen and
I want to be a veterinarian
I love all animals!

Ellen's brother Rick is completely opposite. In his scribble below, you will notice it is more linear and angular. Rick is one year younger than Ellen. As toddlers, one day they were jumping on the bed when Rick pushed Ellen; she almost hit her head. When their mother saw what occurred, she told Rick, "*You hurt Ellen's heart*" (just as she did with Ellen). Rick looked at them both in disbelief, turned around and once again started jumping on the bed. Their mother was so upset that Rick did not seem to understand or care, so she grabbed him by the arm, pulled him down and said it again. Rick said, "*Ellen no owie heart*". Feeling more frustration, she spanked him and he cried himself to sleep.



When their father came home, he was informed of the incident in detail. He went into Rick's room, sat on the side of his bed and said, "Rick, Ellen could have hit her head on that (pointing to nightstand), she could have went to the hospital. It is very important not to push people". Rick replied, "Okay, daddy".

Children who scribble or draw mostly linear, angular, square, or straight shapes tend to handwrite that way as well. Take a moment and think about some of the most successful entrepreneurs, CEO's, accountants, military, and police people you know (logical) and you'll notice this is a very typical writing.

Below is Rick's current writing; he is currently 14 years old. Notice that his writing has more stick-like, angular, or vertical shapes which shows he is someone who reacts logically to people and situations. So as a child, spouse, employee, he needs discipline and constructive criticism that appeals to his logical side. He needs to see facts; he is the "see it to believe it" person.

My name is Rick and I want
to be a Marine. I
am in karate and I like
hand-to-hand combat.

In fact, when asked about the incident, he simply said, "I don't remember that incident but just hearing it now I'd say it didn't make sense then, just like it doesn't make sense now. How could I hurt her heart when I never touched it?" Lesson learned – for both Rick and his parents... and hopefully you too.

It is never too late to adjust parenting styles; just look at the writing of older kids using the guidelines above.

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