

Alternatives to Spanking

by Kendra Nenia (CCC Teacher)

Before delving into this heavy topic I want to say, parenting is hard. Period. It can be a difficult, exhausting, and an unappreciative job! It is normal to feel frustrated, angry, upset and sometimes alone as we work through tough parenting decisions. Know that the teachers here do understand all of those parenting related feelings. That's why I am writing about and presenting this information, to give you alternatives and acknowledge what you do as parents, on a daily basis, isn't always easy.

In this article I will define and clarify what spanking is; address 5 reasons not to use spanking; I will share alternatives to spanking, and lastly share tips and pointers to help you during those stressful times.

What is spanking? It is a form of corporal punishment. It includes whoopin', slapping, grabbing, popping, smacking... handling your child roughly in any way is a form of corporal punishment. FYI... If you hit your child with any object (belt, brush, fly swatter, wooden spoon) it falls under the U.S. definition of abuse. Corporal punishment is... the use of physical force with the intention to cause a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or the control of the child's behavior. Which leads me to an interesting fact; in the U.S. we are not allowed to perform corporal punishment on any inmate in our correctional system. It is illegal to do so. BUT, corporal punishment against a child is overlooked time after time. It is socially sanctioned.

So, why should you not spank your child? Here are 5 points I pulled from a recent seminar I attended at a CAEYC conference presented by Michele Knox PhD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toledo, College of Medicine, and Margarita Hernandez, Program Coordinator for Pillars-Safe From the Start called "*I was spanked and I turned out OK.*"

1. **Spanking has limited control.** Two out of the five studies that were presented showed decreased compliance. The studies actually supported the fact that children who were guided by parents and caregivers who used firm verbal directives and discipline had a higher level of compliance. Children who are spanked were found to have a lower moral internalization. That means when parents are away those children are far less likely to make good choices and do what they are supposed to do. Also, most cases of abuse began with socially sanctioned discipline. It's difficult to show our children how to maintain control over their choices when we are using a form of discipline that leads adults to lose complete control.
2. **Children who are spanked are more aggressive.** Another result of one of the studies presented at this workshop stated that children who were hit at 3 years of age were 50% more aggressive at age 5. Other findings were as follows: a) delinquent behaviors increased; b) there were medium amounts of damage that occurred to the parent/child relationship; c) there was a worsened state of children's mental health; d) there was an increase in physical abuse towards children; e) increase in adult aggression; f) increase in adult criminal behavior; g) small increased risk of abuse towards their own spouse and/or children.

3. **Children who are spanked have lower I.Q.'s.** Children who were re-directed by using other forms of guidance or discipline were shown to have an IQ score of *5 points higher* than children who were spanked. Why? Corporal punishment or the constant threat of violence is stressful! When individuals are under that amount of stress has a negative effect on brain development. During the act of spanking a child, zero learning can occur.
4. **What does spanking teach your child?** Number 1... spanking teaches children that violence is ok. It says that when others aren't doing what you want them to do hitting them is the solution. When you spank you are teaching your child to be anxious and aggressive. Spanking displays to children that they are not worthy to live with the freedom from violence and aggression like adults are. It was only approximately 50 years ago that beating your wife was socially sanctioned and expected. Now, we as women can fully expect that freedom. It was "during the 1960s, the women's liberation movement began drawing attention to violence committed against women, and the battered women's movement began to form."
<http://www.answers.com/topic/domestic-violence>
5. **I was spanked and I turned out O.K.** You are probably right but stop and think...
 - You would have turned out fine even if you weren't spanked. (And your childhood would have been a lot less painful.)
 - Not all kids who were spanked turned out bad – but why take a chance? Do your best as a parent to ensure your child will have the best future you can offer.
 - Back then we didn't know any better... **NOW WE DO!**

If this article is all about not spanking then we as parents need rational alternatives to spanking, as well as ways to deal with what can be frustrating moments during our parenting journey. So here are some tips, ideas and suggestions. Hopefully you can each find something that works and apply to other parenting strategies!

TEN ALTERNATIVES TO SPANKING By Destry Maycock. Article source:
<http://www.EzineArticles.com>

Spanking is only a temporary solution to ongoing problems. Spanking usually leaves a child wondering what should I do differently so I don't get hit again. Seldom are spankings followed by instruction on what the child needs to do or stop doing. It generally is nothing more than a release of the parent's frustration directed toward the child. It teaches a child to comply because of fear rather than a sense of what is right or wrong. It teaches children that violence is an acceptable way to solve their problems. Children who are spanked often have a greater risk of low self-esteem, aggression, lying, cheating, depression and bullying. Spanking sets the example that it is okay to hit when a person is upset or angry. Below are ten alternatives to spanking that you might find helpful.

- a. Give choices. A choice gives some control back to the child on the parents' terms. Parents who are really good at providing choices have children who are more compliant and good at making decisions!
- b. Take a timeout. Yes, you the parent walk away. It is perfectly okay to say. "I'm too upset to deal with you right now; we will talk about this later."
- c. Get someone else involved. If you feel like your child has got you so angry that you may not be in control, then ask someone else to help you who is not as intimately involved in the situation. This reduces the likelihood that you will strike your child.
- d. Teach them what you expect. Instead of punishing them for misbehaving, teach them what they can do differently. Tell them, "Next time, please hang your coat up in the closet! How can we help you remember to do this?"
- e. Recognize their positive behaviors. So, when they hang up that coat tell them how much you appreciate that! Too often parents only notice their children's misbehaviors and disregard the things they do well.
- f. Timeout. The general rule is one minute for every year of their age. The setting where the timeout takes place isn't as important as the fact you are tying the misbehavior to the consequence. Try to make it a place that is quiet and the child is unable to get your attention or be unintentionally rewarded. If a child is having a tantrum then their time should start when they have calmed down and can keep it under control for the duration of the timeout.
- g. Consequence. Providing a logical consequence is often very effective. Always tie the consequence back to the misbehavior. "I would like to be able to take you to the store but remember the last time how you ran around the store and wouldn't listen to me. Well, I am not up for that. You are staying home with _____. Maybe next time you will be able to listen and you can go with me."
- h. Pick your battles. Pick the top four things that you just can't tolerate and focus on disciplining them just for those four behaviors. This lets your child know what is really important to you and you don't come across as if you are disciplining them for every little infraction.
- i. Set limits. Instead of telling your children what to do try telling them what you are going to do or allow. "I will be happy to take you to your friends when you have finished your chores."
- j. State your request in the positive. Have you ever noticed how we usually make a request or give directives in the negative? The first thing your child hears... what they can't have. Just by changing the structure of how you make request will increase your child's cooperation. Try stating things in the positive by telling them what they can have or what you will allow. They are less likely to argue when you are telling them what they can have or what you will allow.

12 Simple Alternatives to Lashing out at Your Child

- Take a deep breath... and another. Then remember you are the adult.
- Close your eyes and imagine you are hearing what your child is about to hear.
- Press your lips together and count to 10... or 20.
- Put your child in a time-out chair (one minute for each year of their age).
- Put yourself in a time-out chair. Think about why you are angry; is it your child, or is your child simply a convenient target for your anger?
- Phone a friend.
- If someone can watch the children, go outside and take a walk.
- Take a hot bath or splash cold water on your face.
- Hug a pillow.
- Turn on some music. Maybe even sing along.
- Pick up a pencil and write down as many helpful words as you can think of. Save the list.
- Call 1-800-4-A-CHILD

<http://www.dhhs.statenc.us/dss/cps/about.htm>

Additional and informative sites and resources you may be interested in...

- www.zerotothree.org
- www.stophitting.org – provides a lot of religious clarification about spanking.
- Greene, Ross. The Explosive Child
- Barkley, R. The Defiant Child
- Parents Raising Safe Kids, actagainstviolence.org