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Study: Spanking May Cause Long-Term Damage

Critics scoff at link to substance abuse

By **Nicolle Charbonneau**
HealthSCOUT Reporter

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WEDNESDAY, Oct. 6 (HealthSCOUT) -- When a child is misbehaving, a swift spanking on the rear end does nothing more than get their attention and tell them to smarten up, right?

Wrong, says a new study in today's *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. According to researchers at McMaster University, the impact of such spankings may turn up later in that child's adult life -- perhaps even as a psychiatric disorder.

The findings have stirred up the heated debate over the corporal punishment of children. While some experts believe that spanking should be banned, the idea of giving the state final say over spanking is raising the ire of those who think parents should ultimately decide how to discipline their kids. In Nevada, state Senate Majority Leader William Raggio (R-Reno) sponsored a bill that permits parents or legal guardians to use reasonable corporal punishment to discipline their children. The bill became law in late June.

Dr. Harriet MacMillan, a child psychiatrist at the Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk and the lead author of the study, examined data from questionnaires filled out



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in 1990 and 1991 for the Ontario Health Supplement Survey. After ruling out responses that clearly indicated a history of physical or sexual abuse, MacMillan was left with nearly 4,900 subjects.

The respondents then took a standardized test to determine if they had an anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, alcohol abuse or dependence disorder, or major externalizing problem (such as drug abuse or antisocial behavior).

MacMillan found that adults who recalled being spanked or slapped "sometimes" or "often" were at twice the risk of an alcohol-related disorder or developing a drug abuse or antisocial behavior problem and 43 percent more likely to develop anxiety disorders.

Where does the rod fit in?

But is spanking actually to blame? According to MacMillan, there are three major possibilities. One, there may be a direct causal relationship between corporal punishment and these disorders. Two, slapping or spanking may have accompanied some damaging form of punishment, such as harsh verbal discipline. Finally, these psychiatric disorders could have been in place before the slapping or spanking. But while the third idea is scientifically valid, MacMillan suggests that it's unlikely that, for example, children had alcohol problems before they were spanked.

MacMillan openly admits to supporting a campaign to repeal a section of Canada's Criminal Code that permits the use of "reasonable force" by parents to discipline their children. In her view, "spanking or slapping sends a message that aggression is an effective way to get others to do what someone wants them to do."

In a related editorial, University of New Hampshire professor Murray Straus argues that spanking teaches children that hitting is somehow the morally right way to correct behavior.

Straus, who feels that the word "spanking" is a cultural euphemism for hitting, believes that the United States should join countries such as Sweden and Denmark in banning spanking. "I think it's not only bad for kids, I think it's bad for the whole society," says Straus. "It certainly works, it would be silly to deny that. But in the short run it

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doesn't work any better than other things, and in the long run, it boomerangs."

Raggio believes that if parents don't have the right to spank their children, kids will grow up without a sense of respect for authority figures, including parents, teachers and law enforcement officials. "Many kids say 'If you touch me, I'll report you to the welfare department or I'll call the police,'" says Raggio. "This [bill] tells parents, many of whom felt that if they even laid a hand on their child's butt that they'd be arrested, that they do have a right to discipline their child -- so long as they do it reasonably.

"The child who the parents fail to discipline in a reasonable manner is the child that's going to be defiant," says Raggio. "And it doesn't take a survey or a rocket scientist to come to that conclusion. I think parental good sense will tell you that you sometimes need to get the child's attention, and a little whack on the butt is not going to hurt."

What To Do

There are many views on this issue. Here are several links to Web sites that [disagree with spanking](#) as a form of discipline, and these Web pages from [ReligiousTolerance.Org](#) look at both side of the corporal punishment debate.

You can also check out these spanking alternatives from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) or read this statement by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) on spanking.

This HealthSCOUT story notes that spanking is definitely not the way to deal with [bedwetting](#).

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SOURCES: Interviews with Harriet L. MacMillan, M.D., associate professor, departments of psychiatry, behavioral neurosciences and pediatrics, child psychiatrist, Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk, McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences Corporation, Hamilton, Canada, Murray A. Straus, Ph.D., co-director, Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H., and Sen. William J. Raggio, (R-Reno), Senate Majority Leader, Nevada state Senate, Reno, Nev.; Oct. 5, 1999 *Canadian Medical Association Journal*

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John Bradshaw on Spanking

From "The Bradshaw Connection," broadcast on November 22, 1996, WOR-TV.

"...People who justify physical punishment were almost always spanked and physically punished themselves. As children, we numb-out our bodies while we are being spanked. So, if we express anger about it, we get punished for *that*. As grown-ups, we now idealize our parents and justify their actions. This is not about bad people. It's called "delusion."

Strangely enough, the more a child is beaten, the more they create an idealized parent. Doing what your parents did protects the idealization. When grown-ups, who were spanked, spank their own children, they are activating their unconscious need to pass the humiliation on. There is nothing loving about the act of hitting someone who is five times smaller than you, even if you do it with the best of intentions.

Our parents and grandparents were not bad for spanking us. They were uninformed. They drove Model Ts. We don't do that any more. Those who quote the Bible to justify their honest beliefs forget that the Bible makes its harshest judgement on those who hurt little children.

These are my thoughts for today. We'll see you on the next Bradshaw Difference."

Return to [Table of Contents](#)

	Current User Anonymous	Home	Log In	Import	Help
	Keyword Search Example: +"sleeping beauty" +prince -dragon				
	Related Links and Topics Example: http://www.links2go.com/				
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The Bible and the Rod

by Adah Maurer and James Wallerstein

"He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he who loveth him chastiseth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). "Chasten thy son while there is still hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

These are quotations from the Book of Proverbs, the twentieth book of the Holy Bible. There are some who hold that these proverbs are the Word of God. That the Lord sanctions and indeed advocates the corporal punishment of youth. But the Holy Bible tells us otherwise. Proverbs is the word of a mortal man, "Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel" (Proverbs 1:1). The tenth chapter tells us again, these are "The Proverbs of Solomon" (Prov. 10:1).

God's voice appears frequently in the Old Testament. From the first stunning phrase, "Let there be light" and "It is not good that man should be alone", the words that God speaks are labeled clearly.

God speaks to Adam and Eve in anger for their disobedience (Genesis 3). God lays a curse on Cain for the murder of Abel (Genesis 4). God warns Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6). He tells Abraham to circumcise all male children as a token of the Holy Covenant (Gen. 17:10-14).

The Lord blesses Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5). He comforts Rebekah, mother of the twins, Jacob and Esau, in her pregnancy (Gen. 25:23). God instructs Jacob to build an altar (Gen 35:1).

The Lord promises Moses to deliver the Children of Israel from bondage (Exodus 6). He reveals the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

God tells Samuel to select a king over Israel (I Samuel 8:22). He commands David to smite the Philistines (I Samuel 23:2-4).

God tells Joshua to blow the seven trumpets that the walls of Jericho may crumble (Joshua 6:2-5). He tells Gideon to destroy the evil altar of Baal (Judges 6:25). God appears out of a whirlwind to the suffering Job and restores his faith (Job, Chapters 38 to 42).

The Lord speaks to Jeremiah and pronounces judgment against Judah and Jerusalem for their abominations (Jeremiah, Chapters 1 to 25). He speaks to Jonah and bids him call Nineveh to repentance (Jonah 1:2). And God speaks to Elijah not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, nor in the wind that rent the mountains, but "in a small still voice". God bids the aging prophet anoint Elisha as his successor and anoint Jehu as King that Jehu may destroy the evil worshippers of Baal (I Kings 19:12-18).

There are times in the Holy Bible when God Himself speaks. At other times, He sends an Angel, that is a Divine Messenger. But the Holy Bible also records the words and thoughts of men. Some of these human sayings are wise and inspiring. Some are foolish and wrongful. But these human words are quite different from the Words of the Lord.

God does also talk to Solomon - twice to bless him (I Kings 3:11-14, 9:2-9) and later to

condemn Solomon for his evil-doing (I Kings 11:11-13), but never to approve using "the rod" on youth. The words of Proverbs are Solomon's only. Never the Lord's.

THE ROD OF GOD

In the Bible, the rod is many things. It is a symbol of miraculous power. Moses hold up his rod and the waters of the Red Sea part before the escaping Hebrews (Exodus 14:16). He lifts up his rod and the Children of Israel prevail over their enemies (Exodus 17:9). In the desert, he smites his rod against a rock and water flows (Numbers 20:11).

The rod of Levi blossoms as a plant and God designates the House of Levi as the true priests of Israel (Numbers 17:8).

The rod is the symbol of God's anger and retribution. "I will visit their iniquities with the rod and their transgressions with stripes" (Psalms 89:32). The Assyrian king, conquering Judah, is "the rod of God's anger" (Isaiah 10:5). Suffering Job cries out, "Let him take his rod away from me" (Job 9:34).

Sometimes, on the other hand, the rod symbolizes God's gentle guidance. "Thy rod and staff, they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4).

Again, the rod symbolizes the force and power of a human tyrant. "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelations 19:15). "Thou hast broken the rod of the oppressor" (Isaiah 9:4). "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous" (Psalms 125:3).

And the rod may be just a twig, with no symbolism at all. "Jacob took him rods of green poplar" (Genesis 30:37).

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

Exclusively in the Book of Proverbs is the rod recommended for child rearing. "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from Hell (Prov. 23:13, 14).

These references are most frequently quoted by the advocates of corporal punishment in school and home. They could, however, equally cite the Bible to support the flogging of adults. Deuteronomy (25:2,3) authorizes forty stripes for "he who is worthy to be beaten". St. Paul was among the victims of this law (II Corinthians 11:24).

Proverbs urges corporal punishment for Fools as well as children. "A rod for the fool's back" (Proverbs 26:3).

The corporal punishers, understandably never quote the part about using the rod on fools. For if *this* Proverb were strictly enforced, they might find themselves on the receiving end.

But let us leave the fools to fend for themselves and return to the kids. The Biblical authority for the whipping of youths in school and home rests solely on King Solomon's Proverbs and has no other Biblical support.

AN OVERRATED KING

Tradition has attributed great wisdom to King Solomon. *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, however, terms him "perhaps the most overrated figure in the Old Testament"¹. He accumulated great wealth and treasure and erected the magnificent Temple. But ordinary people were oppressed and impoverished by his crushing taxation and forced labor.

So great was Solomon's passion for wealth that he "gave away" "twenty cities in Galilee" to the King of Tyre (I Kings 9:11). The King of Tyre, we are told, was displeased and thought he got stung.

In his later years, Solomon "did evil in the sight of God". He turned to idol worship. To "Chemosh, the abomination of Moah, and Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon, and the Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians" (I Kings 11:4-8). These were not just a passing fancy. Solomon built temples to the three abominations which stood throughout his lifetime. Later, King Josiah tore these "mounds of corruption" down (II Kings 23:13).

Ashtoreth was a Semitic goddess of love and fertility. Chemosh may have been her mate and a god of war.

Most nasty and evil of all was the bloody Meloch (Moloch) to whom children were sacrificed, and who became one of the chief devils in the Christian Hell. Moloch is cited by Milton in *Paradise Lost*: "Horrid king...besmeared with blood and parent's tears..."².

One might forgive Solomon's dalliance with the sexy Ashtoreth, who was relatively harmless. But should we take advice on child-rearing from one who followed the abominations of Moloch?

Perhaps the abominations and the Proverbs were not altogether unrelated. Gibson³ and others have shown that youth floggings involve deep subconscious drives, both sexual impulses (Ashtoreth) and violent impulses (Chemosh, Moloch).

ROD INSPIRED WISDOM

"The rod and reproof bring wisdom." (Proverbs 29:15) Now King Solomon, we are told, had seven hundred wives and thus must have had a goodly number of children. Presumably he practiced what he preached and all were raised by the rod.

How did his own children turn out? Did they honor their father and grow in wisdom? Perhaps the story of Solomon's sons carries the real message of what happens to families when children are beaten with rods.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king. At the coronation, the people petitioned for a redress of grievances. Led by Jeroboam, once Solomon's chief executive officer but later an exile in Egypt, they came before the new king and said, "your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on

us and we will serve you." (II Chronicles 10:4)

Rehoboam was unsure of how to answer. He told them to come back in three days and sought counsel, first from the elder statesmen among his father Solomon's wisemen. They advised that he agree to lighten the load.

Their counsel was: "If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be loyal subjects."

But Rehoboam rejected the advice from the elder statesmen and turned instead to the young men who had grown up with him - the horde of half brothers who were also Solomon's sons. From them he heard the ultimate insult to the memory of their father. They said to tell the people:

"My little finger is thicker than my father's loins." (II Chronicles 10:10).

What Solomon's son said of their father remains in the private and vulgar language of junior high age boys to this day. To say that a man has a thin, small organ is to say that he lacks what it takes to be a man, that he is a wimp with no real guts at all. To growing boys, this is the ultimate insult.

Solomon's sons advised their elder brother to tell the people - as some might express it today, "You ain't seen nothing yet!" They told him to say: "My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." (I Kings 12:14) What were scorpions? It sounds like they may have been whips with multiple strips with stingers at the tips, perhaps something like a cat-o-nine-tails used to flog sailors in the days of sail. Whatever scorpions were, they were dreaded by the people.

King Rehoboam followed the advice of the young men who had been raised with him under the "rod of correction." The people who had come to him in good faith listened to his insulting threats and went home to their tents. But they were so angry that the next time the King and his foreman in charge of forced labor came to conscript laborers, they stoned the foreman to death and Rehoboam himself barely escaped in his chariot back to town. (II Chronicles 10:18)

Ten of the tribes, led by Jeroboam revolted. Many years of devastating civil war followed. "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life" (I Kings 15:6). Rehoboam forsook the Lord and turned to idol worship. Jerusalem was raided by the Egyptians who carried off much of Solomon's treasure. Rehoboam "did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (II Chronicles 12:9,14).

The civil war continued after Rehoboam's death. At length the divided and weakened Jewish kingdom, first Israel in the north, then Judah in the south, was overrun and conquered.

Rehoboam and his half-brothers, indeed seem far more like an abused child than an example of rod-inspired wisdom.

Nowhere in the Bible does God approve the hitting of kids. When the Lord stops the sacrifice of Isaac, He tells Abraham, "Lay not your hands upon the lad and do nothing to

him" (Genesis 22:12). God doesn't say, "Don't kill the lad, but it's all right to beat him."

THE VIEW OF JESUS

"Foolishness is found in the heart of a child. But the rod of correction will drive it far from him." So declared Solomon (Proverbs 22:15). But Jesus held otherwise. "Verily, I say unto you, unless you become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

To Jesus, not only did the grown-ups *not* have all the answers, but they may have forgotten things that they knew in youth. Many things fade as we depart from childhood. The power to laugh joyfully, to dream and imagine, to love truly and form deep friendships, to believe in wonders and sense the things of the Spirit. In teaching youth our knowledge, instead of "beating the foolishness out of them", we may have something to learn in return.

Some of the gloomier theologians believed that children were born depraved. They were "tainted with sin" and had to be beaten and subdued. Thus, John Wesley wrote, "Break his will, if you would not damn the child. Teach him to fear the rod and to cry softly ... Break his will now that his soul shall live"⁴. But Jesus viewed the child as did the poet Wordsworth:

In trailing clouds of glory do we come
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy ...
At length, the man perceives it die away
And fade into the common light of day.⁵

Said Jesus, "Suffer the little children to come unto me., and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of Heaven" (Mark 10:14)

And Jesus warned, "It were better for him if a millstone were hanged around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

Jesus does not advocate throwing child abusers into the sea with millstones around their neck. He just says it would be better for them if it happened.

There are some who cite the Bible to populate our schools and homes with rods and paddles. But they are very silent on the subject of millstones.

Instead of force and fear, Jesus would bring forth the Divine Power that lay within, for man was made in the image of God. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) .. "Seek and ye shall find ... Call and it shall be answered ... Knock and it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7).

And Jesus asks, "Of what man is there of you who, if his son asks for bread, would give him a stone?" (Matthew 7:9)

Yet for hundreds of years, in the schools of avowedly Christian nations, youths who sought the bread of education were given the stone of corporal punishment.

THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

St. Paul took a gloomier view of human nature. But he never favored "beating the sin out of kids". The chastisers of children were sinful themselves.

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth and scourgeth. The Lord dealeth with you as with sons. If ye be without chastisement, ye are bastards and not sons"

"The Lord chastiseth us for our profit, that we may partake of His Righteousness".

But human fathers, he warned, "Chastise us after their own pleasure" (Hebrews 12:5-10).

Certain elders, over the centuries, have misread this Epistle. Modestly, they have set themselves in the Lord's place and proceeded to chastise and scourge youth "for their own good". They failed to heed the warning of Jesus: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For what measures ye mete out, so shall be meted out to you" (Matthew 7:1,2).

Paul's Epistle shows great psychological insight. The punishing father (or teacher, master, guardian) may derive unwholesome pleasure out of chastising a culprit. The flogger gets enjoyment from his flogging, though he pretends it is a painful duty. This can be as sinful as the punished sin.

Paul had only contempt for the human floggers who wielded their rods unjustly and for selfish reasons. He suffered from them, too. In Macedonia, Paul and a companion, Silas, were severely beaten, put in stocks and jailed, after being falsely accused of stirring up violence. Paul had freed a troubled girl from possession by an evil spirit that gave her psychic powers. The girl's master, who had made a lot of money from her fortune-telling, caused the whippings of Paul and Silas to get even (Acts 16:16-23).

Sinful humans were not fit to chastise justly. Only divine punishments were righteous. Chastisements should be left to God.

Again, Paul asks, "Which shall it be? Shall I come to you with the rod? Or with love and the spirit of meekness?" (I Corinthians 4:21).

There is no hypocrisy here, as in the Proverbs, about beating somebody because you love him. The *rod* or *love*. It must be one or the other. It cannot be both. Paul does not doubt that love and meekness are the way of Christ.

And Paul wrote:

Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians, 6:4).

Ye Fathers, provoke not your children to anger....(Colossians, 3:21).

We now know well that corporal punishments do provoke youth to anger, though the effects may be delayed. Many of such youths tend to be more violent and aggressive, more inclined to juvenile delinquencies, vandalism and adult crime. They also have lower achievements in learning and education. This has been confirmed many times by scientific studies.

FORCE AND FEAR ARE EVIL. LOVE IS DIVINE.

Nowhere is there a more sublime statement of Christianity than in the Pastoral Letter of the Apostle John (6). He urges Love rather than Force and Fear - in education and in life.

We urge all Christians next time to reach for the Bible instead of the rod or paddle and read the words of John.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them (fear and evil), because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (I John 4:4).

"God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God..."

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love casteth out fear. Fear is torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:16,18).

CONCLUSIONS

There is no authority in the Bible for the corporal punishment of children with rod or otherwise, except in the Proverbs of Solomon. It is only Solomon who recommends child-beating. Never the Lord.

Solomon's child-rearing methods worked very badly for his own son, Prince Rehoboam. Solomon has an undeserved reputation for wisdom. In reality, he left his country oppressed and impoverished. In his later years, he turned to idol worship and practiced "the abominations of Chemosh and Moloch".

There is no support for the beating of youth outside of Solomon's Proverbs. Solomon's views are controverted both by Jesus and the Apostle John.

Paul warned Fathers against the anger and resentment that might be aroused in their children by corporal punishments. The way of love was better.

St. Paul deplored the punishment of youth by human fathers who chastised youth "for their own pleasure". Only divine chastisements were righteous.

Jesus and John saw children as being close to God and urged love rather than fear in education.

If a Christian henceforth grabs for a rod or a paddle because "the Bible says so", he is heeding the words of an idol-worshipping king, rather than the words of Christ.

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	Keyword Search Example: +"sleeping beauty" +prince -dragon				
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Directions: [Click to Show Directions]					



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- 5 → [Bible and the Rod, The](#)
- 2 → [Influence of Corporal Punishment...](#)
- 4 → [Introduction to Project Nospank ...](#)
- 3 → [John Bradshaw on Spanking](#)
- 1 → [Sexual Dangers of Spanking Child...](#)
- [Spanking - a Shortcut to Nowhere](#)
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The Influence of Corporal Punishment on Crime

by **Adah Maurer, Ph.D. and James S. Wallerstein (1987)**

The last legal flogging of a convicted felon in the United States occurred in Delaware in 1952. The barbaric practice was made illegal in that year, but Delaware waited until 1972 to formally remove the whipping post from the state penitentiary.

Flogging in the Navy for drunken or disorderly conduct was abolished in 1853. The Marines finally forbade all forms of physical punishment in 1957 after a drill sergeant led a disciplinary march into a bog where six young men were drowned. Military instructors now may not touch the person or the clothing of a recruit and "Any fracture, concussion, contusion or welt shall be considered prima facie evidence of excessive force." There are no exceptions made on the grounds that some young men bruise easily.

Slavery and involuntary servitude had always been maintained with the help of whips, but that disappeared in the United States with the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln, January 1, 1863.

Spousal abuse used to be termed "reasonable chastisement of wives" and was presumed necessary to maintain the sanctity and stability of the family. All states now have laws against such assaults, and law enforcement and the courts have begun to take seriously, complaints of spousal battery.

Only Children

Now, in 1987, physical punishment is considered too severe for felons, murderers, criminals of all kinds and ages, including juvenile delinquents, too demeaning for soldiers, sailors, servants and spouses. But it remains legal and acceptable for children who are innocent of any crime.

The reasoning behind this curious discrepancy has been the belief that physical punishment will prevent the child from becoming a criminal. The frequent headlines: "Rising Tide of Juvenile Delinquency" usually attribute the situation to a decline of the use of corporal punishment in schools and homes. "Permissiveness," or letting the child do as he pleases, assumed by some to be the only alternative to hitting, is pervasively believed to be the primary cause of anti-social behavior. In the good old days, it is said, "old fashioned discipline" kept children in line. There was very little crime. Harmony reigned. Or did it?

The Truth About the "Good Old Days"

There are no reliable statistics on the extent of crime a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. From all reports, however, crime in the U.S. was extensive, especially violent crime and crimes among the young. The good citizens of 19th century America were also alarmed. They looked back to the good old days of simple rural life, before the growth of the cities. The crowded and crime-ridden Eastern cities were contrasted unfavorably with the "wide open spaces" of the West -- the West, that is, of Jesse James and Billy the Kid!

Discipline in the one room schoolhouses was violent. Often the teacher engaged in a bare knuckle fight with the biggest student as a warning to the others of what would happen to them if they provoked his wrath. Horace Mann, the Father of American education, fulminated against the number of floggings per day, sometimes more than the number of scholars. Most of our great grandparents were satisfied with a fourth grade education and eighth grade was the end for all but five percent. The lawless mountain men of the Old West were recruited from the 14-year olds who high tailed it after one thrashing too many. Bands of outlaws stole horses, and plagued the defenseless. Public hangings and lynchings were commonplace while pickpockets worked the crowds. Only the militia and the sheriff's posse maintained any semblance of order.

Yet the myth remains that only woodshed discipline in early youth keeps boys from a life of crime, and that respect for authority is promoted only by painful procedures that induce fear and resentment of authority.

What is the truth? Let's take a good hard look at the facts about the effects of corporal punishment on crime.

After Effects of Physical Punishment

Adrenalin output increases sharply during fear, anger and physical punishment. When this is prolonged or often repeated, the endocrine balance fails to return to baseline. The victim becomes easily angered and prone to poor impulse control and spontaneous violent outbursts.

Educational achievement is affected both directly and indirectly. Studies of prisoners, delinquents, school drop-outs, college freshmen and successful professionals are compared in the following composite report.

D E G R E E O F P H Y S I C A L P U N I S H M E N T					
	Never	Rare	Moderate	Severe	Extreme
Violent inmates at San Quentin	0	0	0	0	100%
Juvenile Delinquents	0	2%	3%	31%	64%
High School drop-outs	0	7%	23%	69%	0
College freshmen	2%	23%	40%	33%	0

Professionals**5%****40%****36%****17%****0**

Taking part in this survey were: 200 psychologists who filled out anonymous questionnaires, 372 college students at the University of California, Davis and California State University at Fresno, 52 slow track underachievers at Richmond High School. Delinquents were interviewed by Dr. Ralph Welsh in Bridgeport, Connecticut and by Dr. Alan Button in Fresno, California. Prisoner information was by courtesy of Hobart Banks, M.S.W., counselor of difficult prisoners at San Quentin Penitentiary, San Quentin, California.

Timing

Do delinquents grow from lack of discipline? Or from too much discipline? Dr. Alan Button reports, "This, it now appears is the wrong question. We should be asking about sequence. Parents of delinquents, all of them, report physical beating in the first ten to twelve years of the child's life, but rarely thereafter. They "wash their hands" of the kid because "nothing works." Then the judge, finding that the boy has no supervision, denounces permissiveness.

The Belt Theory

Dr. Ralph Welsh who has given psychological examinations to over 2,000 delinquents, has developed what he calls. "The Belt Theory of Juvenile Delinquency." Dr. Welsh tells us:

"The recidivist male delinquent who has never been exposed to the belt, extension cord or fist at some time in his life is virtually non-existent. As the severity of corporal punishment in the delinquent's developmental history increases, so does the probability that he will engage in a violent act."

Welsh's data also shows that the principal factor accounting for the over-representation of blacks in our prisons is the greater amount and severity of the physical punishment they endure as children. Black parents who *do not* use belts, boards, extension cords or fists, however, have children no more prone to criminal violence than the children of whites who do not use belts, etc.

Driving Under the Influence

Car crashes caused by drunk driving are increased by a hidden factor. Bottled up anger, when combined with alcohol is the largest cause of the highway death toll which comes to 25,000 deaths every year, or one every 20 minutes. An investigation by Donald C. Pelz of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan in 1973 led to his finding that: "For the young male, anger toward the adult world is likely to find vent in dangerous driving . . . Hostility tends to multiply with their attitude toward the educational system . . . Those who had rejected the school system . . . are likely to reject the highway system." In fact he concluded that abiding anger was even more dangerous than drinking per se, but that the combination was the most deadly. The insult to high school boys of an embarrassing paddling raises the adrenaline level, which if repeated often enough stays high all the time.

They are the timebombs whose battlefield casualties litter the roads and intersections of our country.

Spanking the Baby

The effect begins early. Babies just over a year were observed with their mothers at a clinic at the University of Houston. As reported in Psychology Today interviews about the methods of discipline they used revealed that the babies who were punished physically were the least likely to obey instructions not to touch breakables. Even more importantly, seven months later the punished children lagged behind the others in developmental tests.

The Real Reason

Why, with all this evidence about the destructive effects of physically painful punishments, do so many people continue to believe that the only alternative to hitting children is to negligently allow them to do as they please? And that what they please is always delinquent, if not outright criminal?

At the National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment at Temple University in Philadelphia a large research project inquired of adults the reasons for their beliefs, both pro- and anti-paddle. Most thought they had arrived at their belief logically, but in truth, the real determinant was their own childhood history. Those who had been spanked, paddled, switched, whipped etc. tended overwhelmingly to believe in it. Those who had not been hit, and had attended non-hitting schools, did not believe hitting did any good or were shocked and dismayed at the very idea. The action-language of our childhood overrides logic more often than not. Minds and habits do change, however, but it takes thoughtful assessment and considerable motivation even by people of goodwill.

Institutional Abuse

Whether the beatings were at the hands of the natural parents, or others who stood in for them seems to make little difference except that institutional punishments lack even intermittent moments of pride and belonging, that might in some cases mitigate slightly the worst effects. Charles Manson, the child of a 15 year old single mother had his first contact with police when he was 7 and spent the rest of his life in a series of foster homes, reform schools and prisons. He could have survived the rejection of his mother, he says, if reform school officials hadn't been institutionally cruel, whipping, beating and raping him, and letting other inmates do the same.

A survey of 3,900 people in Houston as to what effect school corporal punishment had on their lives found that 76 percent of them said the effects had been negative and that they continued to resent what happened to them. That leaves about a fourth of them who were able to shrug it off and a mere handful who felt grateful for the timely punishment that "saved me from a life of crime." Thus, the one who testifies that "I was paddled when I was a kid and I turned out okay," must be labelled a survivor and congratulated on the strength of character that enabled him to make a life in spite of early mistreatment. Psychologist

Robert Fathman, has offered this apt analogy: "Many people grew up in homes that had outhouses and they turned out okay. But do outhouses get the credit?"

Return to [Table of Contents](#).

	Current User Anonymous	Home	Log In	Import	Help
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	Related Links and Topics Example: http://www.links2go.com/				
Directions: [Click to Show Directions]					



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→ [Spanking - a Shortcut to Nowhere](#)

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Introduction to Project NoSpank

By Jordan Riak, Executive Director, PTAVE

In case the title of this Web site has left room for doubt, let me restate our thesis this way: If you believe that the deliberate infliction of pain on a child is sometimes justifiable... If you believe that punishment corrects bad behavior and promotes good behavior, then you will not be pleased with what you read here. Consider this fair warning.

Our intention through **Project NoSpank** is to equip readers with an effective weapon of defense against the pervasive, primitive myth that by making children feel worse we cause them to behave better.

The focus here is narrow. This is not a how-to manual for parents. Excellent resources are abundantly available for that purpose, as any parent who honestly searches for them can attest. The problem is, committed, habituated child-hitters/child-hurters don't seek parenting advice, don't believe they need it and reject it when it's offered. Many of them scoff at such advice even when, for good reason, it has been mandated for them by the courts.

We take the position that children should not be excluded from the legal protections against assault and battery that apply to adults. In fact, the defense of children should be more vigorous because they are more vulnerable, and because the consequences of their early mistreatment are virtually irreversible; because damaged children grow into damaged adults who are likely to avenge themselves in one way or another. If they will not harm others, then they surely will harm themselves. The earlier and the worse the mistreatment, the worse the outcome.


Needless to say, in our society, the view that children are people is a radical one, and profoundly unsettling to many. One can easily anticipate the loud public clamor that will arise in defense of 'traditional values' when enlightened legislatures move toward giving children the same protection against assault and battery that is taken for granted by every other class of citizen. We have heard that clamor before. We have listened to traditionalists predict the end of family life when husbands could no longer chastise their wives... the collapse of industry when foremen could no longer physically punish workers... the disintegration of the military into a mutinous mob the moment the flogging post was removed. Isn't every advance of human rights accompanied by this same noisy chorus?

Today one cannot hit a dog in public without provoking the ire of bystanders, or even risking arrest. But when someone hits a child, in most places it passes unnoticed. In the materials that follow, we will try to expose what is really happening to children, and show what are the consequences to us all. We'll do this without the usual pandering to adult squeamishness on the subject. The standard sweeteners have been omitted here.

Perhaps **Project NoSpank** will give a few beleaguered parents the confidence and the courage to reject the advice: "What your child needs is a good spanking." Perhaps it will encourage more educators to reclaim their profession from the bullies, incompetents and hangers-on, and convince more people in positions of responsibility that it is no longer

acceptable for them to duck for cover every time they hear the 'spanking' debate introduced. Perhaps this Web site can help point the way to a better understanding of the root causes of crime, domestic violence, family dysfunction, addiction and mental illness. If we can help a few readers see past the haze of magical thinking and denial that obscures our culture's systemic abuse of the young, we will have achieved our purpose.

Proceed to [Table of Contents](#).

	Current User Anonymous	Home	Log In	Import	Help
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	Related Links and Topics Example: http://www.links2go.com/				
Directions: [Click to Show Directions]					



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| 4→ John Bradshaw on Spanking | |

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THE SEXUAL DANGERS OF SPANKING CHILDREN

by **Tom Johnson**

1994, Revised 1996

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This publication is available as an 8-page booklet from
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THE SEXUAL DANGERS OF SPANKING CHILDREN

"...It is a disgusting and slavish treatment which would certainly be regarded as an insult if it were inflicted on adults... And consider how shameful, how dangerous to modesty are the effects produced by the pain or fear of the victims. This feeling of shame cripples and unmans the spirit, making it flee from and detest the light of day..."

Quintilian, A.D. 35-95

S P A N K I N G, defined as slapping of the buttocks, is a form of hitting and thus of physical violence. That fact alone should make the spanking of children unacceptable by the same standards that protect adults, who are not as vulnerable. However, there is more to spanking than simply hitting: spanking also trespasses on one of the body's most private and sexual areas -- the buttocks. To fully address the wrongness of spanking children, therefore, we must consider not only the issue of physical violence, but also the issue of sexual trespass.

While the harm of spanking's physical violence has been thoroughly explained and demonstrated over the past century in a vast body of academic literature, scientific research, legal treatises, and relatively recently in the popular media, it is quite rare that the sexual consequences of spanking are openly and seriously discussed. This pamphlet aims to raise public awareness about the sexual aspects which make spanking an especially inappropriate and even dangerous way of disciplining children, whether it is done by parents, educators or other caretakers. While this pamphlet focuses on "spanking," the most seemingly benign form of physical punishment, the arguments raised herein apply equally to paddling, switching, caning, strapping, or any other mode of forcible buttock-beating.

Buttocks are a sexual zone

Like women's breasts, the buttocks are a sexual or erogenous part of the human anatomy, even though they are not actually sex organs. This is why baring one's buttocks in public is considered indecent as well as unlawful and why their exposure in movies or on television constitutes nudity. It is also why someone who uninvitedly fondles another person's buttocks is treated by law as a sexual offender. The sexual nature of the buttocks is explained not

only by their proximity to the genitals, but also by their high concentration of nerve endings which lead directly to sexual nerve centers. Hence, the buttocks are a major locus of sexual signals.

Children are sexual beings

The sexuality of the buttocks is significant not just to adults, but to children as well. Even though they are sexually immature and without an active sex drive, children are from birth neurologically complete sexual beings who are capable of experiencing erotic sensation. The existence of pedophiles, furthermore, means that children can also become the targets of sexual intentions. As much as we might like to imagine childhood as an innocent, carefree world beyond the influence of sexuality, we do children a disservice if we fail to recognize that they too have erogenous zones which deserve consideration and respect.

Spanking as sexual violation

Since children are sexual beings and since the buttocks are a sexual region of the body, we should question the propriety of slapping children's buttocks. We generally understand that fondling or caressing a child's buttocks is a sexual offense (even if the child does not understand it to be so). We also know that slapping an adult's buttocks is a sexual offense (even if the offender does not get sexual pleasure from doing so).

The question, then, is why slapping a child's buttocks is not considered a sexual offense. Is it because spanking, unlike fondling, is physically painful and used to punish misbehavior? No, or painfully spanking a misbehaving adult would not be a sexual offense. Is it because children are less likely to be sexual targets than adults, less likely to feel violated, and therefore protected less strictly? No, or fondling an adult would be a far more serious crime than fondling a child. A more plausible explanation for this breach of logic is simply that the majority of people are unable or unwilling to believe there could be anything indecent about a practice as old, common and accepted as the spanking of children -- something which nearly everyone has received, given or witnessed at least once. And since spankings typically come from esteemed or even beloved authority figures, many people are loath to question this behavior.

In any case, freedom from sexual violation is one of the basic tenets of liberty most revered by Americans and by most of the free world. As this principle of inviolacy applies to adults, it should apply equally, if not especially, to children, who are below the age of consent. Spanking children may be a time-honored tradition, but any tradition that so gratuitously disregards their inviolacy deserves to be discontinued.

Some argue that spanking is justified or even commanded by the Bible, specifically the Book of Proverbs. There is a distinction, however, which should be of key interest to fundamentalists, between the practice in King Solomon's day of beating people on the back and the modern American habit of buttocks-hitting: the latter is not prescribed anywhere in the Bible. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that the Old Testament contains passages which could be (and in some cases have been) construed as divine endorsements of

wife-beating, racial warfare, slavery, the stoning to death of rebellious children and other behaviors that are outrageous by today's standards. As Shakespeare once wrote, "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose."

Spanking as sexual abuse

As in ages past, there are people today who are sexually excited by spanking. This trait, which is often expressed in pornography and associated with sadomasochism, is known in the scientific literature as flagellatism. While many flagellants seek to engage in consensual spanking between adults, some find the spanking of minors to be either more arousing or more opportune.

Since children in this country up to eighteen years old can still be legally and forcibly spanked by parents, guardians, teachers, school principals and other child care professionals, it is often easy for flagellants to obtain positions where they can sexually abuse children with little or no fear of repercussions. As long as society sees spanking as a legitimate act of discipline, and as long as the spanked youths are presumed to have "deserved" it, sexually abusive spankers have an effective moralistic disguise for their true motives. History, court records and current events contain numerous cases of flagellant sexual abuse against defenseless victims, and there is no telling how many instances have gone unreported.

Some adults might rationalize: "Well, I know my intentions are purely nonsexual, so there's nothing wrong with my spanking a child." The main problem with this rationale is that it fails to consider all the children who are at the mercy of other adults, among whom there will always be some with motives that are not so pure - and not necessarily obvious. Even spankings that have no sexual motive contribute to the cover that sexually abusive spankers depend on, affirming the old alibi: "Hey, lots of people spank their kids. So what's the big deal?"

Spanking and psychosexual development

Even without sexual motives on the part of the punisher, spanking can interfere with a child's normal sexual and psychological development. Because the buttocks are so close to the genitals and so multiply linked to sexual nerve centers, slapping them can trigger powerful and involuntary sensations of sexual pleasure. This can happen even in very young children, and even in spite of great, clearly upsetting pain.

This kind of sexual stimulation, which undermines any disciplinary purpose and which most people would agree is unsuitable for children in any context, can cause a child to impressionably attach his or her sexuality to the idea of spanking. This fixation may endure to cause problems in adult life. Or, on the other hand, the child might react against these unseemly feelings of pleasure by repressing his or her sexuality, so much perhaps that as an adult, he or she has difficulty experiencing sexual pleasure and intimacy.

An additional danger is that the confusing mixture of pleasure with pain will become the basis for permanent sadomasochistic tendencies. Sadomasochism, in which a person takes pleasure in inflicting or receiving pain, drives behavior that is destructive to oneself and to

others, and therefore to society at large. While the intensity and background of individuals' sadomasochism varies widely, the great majority of studied cases point to a single origin: childhood whippings, usually on the buttocks.

The odds that spanking a child will lead to psychosexual aberrations would be difficult to calculate. However, the fact that there is any chance at all of these serious problems occurring should be reason enough to do away with the practice of spanking. The risks are completely unnecessary.

Spanking and modesty

Imagine your reaction if an authority figure, having discovered some misdeed of yours, pinned you across his or her lap and began slapping your buttocks. Painfulness aside, most people would consider this a rude, inexcusable assault on their modesty, no matter what they had done to "deserve" it.

Many people might assume that children, especially very young children, are too ignorant or naive to feel such indignity, or perhaps too impressed by the physical pain of spanking to care about much else. The truth is, however, that spanking can seriously injure a child's sense of modesty. When a child is old enough to be told by adults to act modestly (which is not merely a social requirement, but also a wise precaution against potential child molesters), that child is likely to internalize and develop modesty as a personal value that will increase with age. This value persists even though the child might lapse into immodest behavior from time to time, as most children do. Consequently, the child whose buttocks are slapped may experience deep and lasting sexual shame, especially if the punishment is done in front of others or involves a state of undress. Actually, there are some adults who consciously emphasize this humiliation as part of the punishment (and some, for that matter, who do not limit spanking to younger children or even to preteens). But just as inflicting sexual shame is an unthinkable punishment for adults in any civilized society, it is surely an outrageous way to treat children.

It is a strange inconsistency, furthermore, for adults to exhort children to modesty while punishing them in a way that aggressively denies their modesty and privacy. Such mixed messages tend to confuse children or make them skeptical toward adult authority. Especially if adults hope to instill children with strong values of modesty, self-respect, and respect for others -- values that become very important through the trials of puberty and adolescence -- adults should teach by example and refrain from the disrespectful practice of bottom-slapping.

Conclusion

It is not disputed that spanking has a sexual side as well as a punitive side. Indeed, our popular culture and media suggest there is wide awareness of this fact, however unspoken. Society has nonetheless failed to squarely address the serious implications of spanking's punitive/sexual duality. Considering the power of sex to corrupt, along with the coercive nature of punishment, we should be alarmed at the very idea of discipline through spanking

-- all the more so when it is directed at a group of people as powerless, fragile and unsuspecting as children.

EXPERTS' QUOTES

"Spanking on the buttocks can produce definitely erotic sensations, including sexual orgasm, in some children. Some of these children have been known to cause themselves to be spanked, by misconducting themselves on purpose and by pretending distress while receiving the desired 'punishment'... The frequency with which this happens is not known, although it may not be altogether rare. .. The spankings in these cases may have been given for the adult's own perverted gratification ('sadism'); or at least there might have been culpable awareness and toleration of the child's sexual reaction on the part of the adult. ...Only some decades ago perverts masquerading as governesses or tutors were reportedly anything but rare in some European countries." (1965)

J. F. Oliven, pathologist. *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*.

"In many cases, the avowed disciplinary value of flagellation in schools and colleges was a mere pretense to enable sadists to secure sexual titillation." (1886)

George Ryley Scott, historian, sociologist, anthropologist. *The History of Corporal Punishment*.

"When a child is hit on the buttocks...this kind of violent touch can be sexualized in the child's mind not only because of a real flow of blood into the genitalia, but also because of a longing for intimacy with the parent: if painful physical touch is the only fulfillment of that longing, then this can 'feel good'." (1995)

Shere Hite, sex researcher, sociopsychologist. *The Hite Report on the Family*.
Page 42.

"These are the realities that most of us remain eager to deny... So long as children are beaten by adults, the obsessions with domination and submission, with power and authority, with shame and humiliation, with painful pleasure -- all hallmarks of sadomasochism - will remain an enduring consequence of the ordinary violence and coercion done in the name of discipline... Sadomasochism is not an aberration; it is inherent in corporal punishment..." (1990)

Philip Greven, professor of history.
Spare the Child, Page 186.

"I have had constantly to do with neurotics in whom sadistic feelings were first aroused by corporal punishment; after the sadistic impulse thus awakened has been repressed and forms the starting points of very malignant aberrations about which it would be very disingenuous to aver that they would have developed without the free use of the rod... The number of those who are harmed through beating, especially upon the buttocks, is undoubtedly very

great... Even one who passionately contemns sexuality will hardly be inclined to deny that the corporal punishment induced well-marked sexual stimulation -- although the gluteal region is not within the domain of the genital organs." (1924)

Oskar Pfister, physician, psychoanalyst.

Love in Children and its Aberrations.

"Frequent spankings, too, may have a negative impact on sex development. Because of the proximity of the sex organs, a child may get sexually aroused when spanked. Or he may so enjoy the making up that follows the punishment that he will seek suffering as a necessary prelude to love. There are many adult couples who seem to need a good fight before a good night." (1966)

Dr. Haim G. Ginott, child psychologist.

Between Parent and Child.

"Advocates of corporal punishment in schools should examine very carefully the weight of evidence now available and, particularly in light of the pornographic component, consider whether they can justify the continuation of a system with such a capacity for exciting unhealthy interest." (1980)

British Psychological Society,

"Report on Corporal Punishment in Schools."

"Being beaten excites children sexually because it is an intense excitation of the erogenous zones of the skin of the buttocks and of the muscles below the skin..." (1945)

Otto Fenichel, M.D.

The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis,

Page 315.

"Ever since Jean-Jaques Rousseau's Confessions, it has been well known to all educationalists that the painful stimulation of the skin of the buttocks is one of the erotic roots of the passive instrument of cruelty (masochism)." (1905)

Sigmund Freud. Three Essays on the

Theory of Sexuality, VII, Page 193.

The adult flagellant fantasy, in short, always derives from the infantile one. As with all sexual perversions, we are dealing with a variety of arrested development...that puberty and subsequent experience have been unable to dislodge... We need to examine its roots in childhood..." (1979)

Ian Gibson,

The English Vice, Page 284

"But what you would not so readily believe upon my Affirmation, was that there are Persons who are stimulated to Venery by strokes of Rods, and worked up into a flame of Lust by blows... A strange instance what a Power the force of Education has in grafting inveterate ill Habits on our Morals." (1629)

Johann Heinrich Meibom, physician.

De Flagrorum su in Re Veneria &

Luborum Renumque Officio.

Leyden, Pages 5-6, 14-15.

NEWS REPORTS

The New York Times (12/22/92)

The director of a Manhattan junior high school for children at risk of dropping out was arrested yesterday and charged with sexually abusing a 14-year-old boy who was a ninth-grader at the school, officials said... In addition, [Robert Viteretti, deputy commissioner of investigation for the New York City School District] said that after reports of the arrest spread yesterday, two former students telephoned his office to say that they had also been abused by the director. .. Mr. Viteretti said that on two occasions [the director] asked the boy into his office, then closed and locked his door and pulled down the boy's pants and underwear. 'He would start spanking the boy for his own sexual gratification, and stroking and caressing his genitalia,' he said... [The director] has admitted touching and spanking the boy.

Reuters News Service (11/30/93)

A dozen Roman Catholic priests sexually abused 34 boys over two decades at a now-closed seminary, a three-year investigation by the Franciscan Order has found... The abuses included nude games, spanking, fondling, masturbation, and oral sex, a panel of six investigators found.

The Sacramento Bee (3/26/95)

PHOENIX -- The headmaster of a private school has been arrested and accused of forcing a 15-year-old girl to remove her clothing and kneel in prayer while he struck her with a wooden paddle.

The girl's mother witnessed the paddling, too frightened to do anything to stop it, Phoenix police said. The three swats left bruises and welts on the girl's buttocks. The teen's 6-year-old sister, waiting in the next room, also heard her sister's cries for help, police said.

The teen was not even a student at the school. Her mother had brought her there to consider enrolling her in September.

Police say Michael William Wetton told the girl during her 75-minute ordeal on Feb. 24 that he wanted her to understand corporal punishment, which is used to discipline students at the school...

This is not the first time Wetton has been accused of child abuse. He is facing trial next month for allegedly leaving bruises on the buttocks of a 9-year-old student after a paddling in August.

Arizona law allows parents and others in authority to paddle children, as long as they do not use inappropriate force.

After Wetton's arrest, some parents directed anger at the police. The parents said they consider Wetton, an English citizen, a superior teacher who has improved their children's manners and academic performance.

"I'm not sure these aren't trumped-up charges," said Rosemary Rice, a board member of the school and parent of a student.

Cookie O'Kelley, another board member, also is angry over the police action.

"It was ludicrous," she said. "It makes absolutely no sense."

Rice and O'Kelley are defense witnesses for Wetton in his upcoming trial.

O'Kelley, Rice and other parents say they enrolled their children at the academy because they wanted stricter discipline and higher academic standards than public schools provide. Parents must sign a release acknowledging paddling is part of the discipline.

"The Bible says to use the rod," Rice said, adding that the arrest "is an assault on Christian beliefs."...

As part of the orientation, Wetton reportedly took the girl to a room alone and told her to take off her clothes. Crying, she removed everything but her bra and panties. Wetton then struck her once with a wooden paddle. Wetton then reportedly forced the girl to disrobe completely, made her kneel as if in prayer and struck her across the buttocks. Then, police say, he forced her to grab the edge of a table, spread her legs and submit to another swat. Finally, he made her bow down to him and recite the Lord's Prayer.

PTAVE Reports (Australia, 11/83)

BRITAIN -- We reported last month that Colin West, Headmaster of the Lower School, St. Aiden's, Carlisle, would be retried on charges of indecently assaulting girl pupils. The Crown alleges that Mr. West spanked girls, ages 11 to 14, on their bare buttocks with a shoe and then rubbed their buttocks with antiseptic cream... The court heard in March, 1982, two girls were called to West's office because they were not wearing full uniform. West told one to go back to class, but detained the other. She told the court the following: "He dragged me into his office and slammed the door behind him and said, 'I'm going to teach you a lesson.' Then he slapped me across the face. I started crying. He pushed me by the throat and I fell back against the bookcase. He pulled me by the arm and pulled me over his knee. He was kneeling on the floor. He pulled my skirt up and hit me about twice. Then he pulled my knickers down. He hit me across my bare bottom. He kept hitting me until I said I'm telling my mum and dad about you. He put his hands on my shoulders and said, 'I love you more than any other kid in this school. You need not tell your mum what happened.' "

A letter read on **BBC Radio 4's "Any Answers?"** (4/84)

"My partner is a retired headmaster of a prep school where he had the power to beat any small boy. He now spends a great deal of time and energy in contacting young men and women who are willing to be beaten, as this is the only way he can get sexually aroused."

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... , *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

... , *Banished Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

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... , *How to Prevent Violent Criminal Behavior in the Next Generation*. Booklet available from PTAVE. Access later through Table of Contents or [read now](#).

... , *Hablando francamente sobre el pegarles a los niños*. Booklet available from PTAVE. Access later through Table of Contents or [read now](#).

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OPEN LETTER TO EDUCATORS

Dear Educator:

Until recently, the practice of corporal punishment of schoolchildren -- commonly known as "paddling" -- has been sentimentalized and trivialized, its dangers glossed over or denied. Now, as more states and more school districts abandon the practice and as a growing number of parents and other primary caretakers opt for more effective, more humane and less destructive methods of socializing children, the defenders of corporal punishment find themselves diminishing in number and increasingly isolated.

Some physically punitive teachers will tell you that they are merely complying with the wishes of parents who, after all, should have some influence over the management of their children at school. Some physically punitive parents will tell you that their practices are in keeping with those of teachers who, after all, hold a credential and act with the authority of the state. Some school administrators will tell you that the question of corporal punishment will be resolved in due course (by a future generation of administrators), but meanwhile they must be guided by prevailing community values. For the most part, paddlers, spankers and their apologists can do little more than passively resist the arrival of the day when they will be shamed out of the hitting habit or forcibly (legally) weaned from it.

Delay has a price, however. We can no longer pretend to be unaware that corporal punishment causes psychological damage that long outlasts bruises to the skin. Inevitably some victims, now better informed about what has been done to them, will seek redress. Indeed, they should seek redress. It is the purpose of this letter to advise you to act quickly to protect the children who are still at risk, and thereby to protect yourselves.

Either you must be prepared to offer a persuasive argument that the risks of paddling are negligible and are far outweighed by the benefits, or you must be prepared to accept full moral and legal responsibility for any damage caused thereby.

Jordan Riak, Executive Director,
Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE)

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Spanking: a shortcut to nowhere...

[Penelope Leach](#)

Spanking and Non-Spanking Parents

Most parents in Canada spank their children.

A lot of parents take spanking for granted and don't give it much thought. They got spanked for being naughty when they were children. Now they've got children they hand the spanking out. What's the big deal?

Some parents feel more strongly than that about spanking. There's a group that feels spanking is an important part of bringing up children; not only a parental right, but a duty. There's also a group that doesn't really approve of spanking; wouldn't ever plan to spank, or do it in cold blood, but can nevertheless be driven to spanking and then regret it.

Finally, there are a few parents who feel that spanking is a very big deal indeed and wouldn't lay a finger on their children however maddening they were. Some of them have spanked a child once or twice and never forgotten it. Non-spanking parents aren't especially saintly or especially patient: they aren't all middle-class people with (or without) nannies; they don't all have loving partners, supportive families, nice homes or good jobs and they don't only have little girls or just one child each. In fact, there isn't anything special at all about parents who don't spank. They are just people who have thought about hitting children and decided it's got no place in their family relationships because it is unjust and it doesn't help "discipline" either.

Those parents care just as much as everyone else about their children's behaviour. In fact, a lot of them are rather strict parents who set clear limits.

I am a part of that non-spanking group, both as a mother and as a psychologist. I believe that spanking-or tapping, or slapping, or

cuffing, or shaking, or beating or whipping-children is actually wrong. I also believe (and hope to show) that far from producing better disciplined people, spanking makes it much more difficult to teach children how to behave.

Spanking is a shortcut to nowhere. To get where we want to go with our children we need to take a longer route, teaching them with our heads and hearts rather than with our hands and belts.

Spanking has to be wrong because we all agree that hitting people is wrong and children are people - aren't they?

When a bigger child hits a smaller one in the playground, to get his candy or his turn, we call him a bully...

When a youth hits an old lady to get her purse, we call him a mugger...

When a parent hits a child to make him or her obey, is it really any different?

Maybe you will say it is different because that parent's motive is good. She spansks her child 'for good reason'; maybe even 'she does it for the child's sake'. But our society doesn't accept that 'good motives' can make hitting people right. A policeman who hits a suspect behaves wrongly, however keen he may be to solve a crime.

Maybe you will say that spanking children is different because it's in the family and therefore part of a relationship which is both loving and stressful. But that would make it perfectly alright for your partner to end arguments with you by giving you a good slap. And that isn't all right at all. If your partner did that he'd be called a 'wife-beater'.

Under Canadian law, parents (and other caregivers) can hit children as much as they like, short of doing them serious injury, but hitting anyone else is a criminal assault.

If any spanking is wrong, all spanking must be wrong. Lots of parents agree that hitting children and causing real pain is wrong but believe that what they do doesn't count because 'I only give a little tap'.

Of course there are degrees of wrongness. It's worse to murder someone than to mug her and worse to thrash a child with a belt than to spank with your hand. But that doesn't make the 'little tap' all right because it isn't the degree of pain that makes the difference, it's inflicting any pain (or 'sting' or 'smart') on purpose. Every parent will sometimes have to grab a child at the edge of the road or snatch a small hand before it can touch the iron. Sometimes that kind of safety action will hurt a child and lead to tears. But it wasn't meant to hurt, it was meant to prevent hurt.

One mother said, 'Don't talk about hitting and pain. You're making an ordinary slap sound cruel and horrible on purpose...' But when her two year old bothered her while we were talking she slapped him, and she chose his bare legs rather than his diaper-padded bottom. She did hurt him on purpose and it was horrible.

SO WHY DO PARENTS SPANK?

Bringing up children is the most important job in the world and one of the most difficult. Teaching children how to behave is a vital part of that job and parents spank because they think short sharp punishments will teach children not to do things that are forbidden; stop them short when they are being generally tiresome and encourage them to do what they should.

Children cannot be allowed to endanger themselves or other people or things. They have to be persuaded to behave in ways their parents can stand because if parents can't stand their children's behaviour, homes are full of frustration and anger and nobody has any fun. By the time they are through the toddler stage and mixing with other children at nursery and at school they have to learn the social rules that will make them acceptable to people outside the family as well. It's part of good parenting to make sure that a child can be a beloved playmate, welcome visitor and eager member of a class. So clear limits on the one hand, and positive discipline on the other, are so important that if spanking really did help them along we should all have to ask ourselves whether those unjust means were justified by desirable ends. The fact is though, that spanking doesn't help but makes that vital learning much more difficult.

The Evidence that Spanking Doesn't Help

If spanking and other physical punishments worked, you'd expect children who are slapped or spanked 'when they need it' to learn to behave better and better so that they needed punishing less and less often. But that's not the case.

Families who start spanking babies before they are a year old (and 63% of mothers surveyed in 1985 said they did this) are just as likely to spank them very frequently when they are four year olds as families which don't start spanking until later. In fact almost all four year olds are spanked (97% of a big random sample of British children), so spanking babies and toddlers clearly does not produce better-behaved pre-school children.

Plenty of spankings at four don't make for better behaved seven year olds either. Although some children are spanked less by that age, three quarters of that British sample were still spanked regularly 1 - 6 times

a week and one in eight were spanked at least once a day. For some, 'ordinary spanking' has clearly not produced behaviour the parents found acceptable because by their seventh birthday a quarter of all boys and nearly as many girls have been hit with a belt or a strap, a cane or stick, or with any 'suitable' object that came to hand such as a slipper or a wooden spoon.

Whatever lessons those parents are trying to teach, their children clearly are not learning them. There is even some evidence from the British study that they may be less able to learn because physical punishments reduce children's IQ.

If caning or strapping in school had worked as the 'last resort' or 'final sanction' which teachers argued that they needed, you'd expect that one or two beatings would have been enough to 'teach a lesson' to any child. But until physical punishments were banned by law in state schools in 1987, their own punishment books told the opposite story. In every school that used the cane it was the same handful of pupils who were hit with it, again and again, sometimes as often as 10 times over a school year. Even if those were the 'naughtiest' pupils who 'needed the cane' most, being beaten with it certainly did not make them into better pupils who 'needed' it less.

But the clearest evidence that physical punishments don't help to produce well-behaved, socialized people comes from studies of murderers, rapists, muggers and other violent criminals who threaten the lives and security of ordinary people. The life histories of notorious individuals - Adolf Hitler amongst them - record excessive physical discipline in childhood. Studies of whole prison populations all over the Western world show that criminals who use violence against their victims almost invariably had violence used against them when they were children. If our society is becoming increasingly violent it is certainly not because parents 'spare the rod'.

TRY SOME RESEARCH OF YOUR OWN

If you still feel all that is somewhat different from what goes on in your family and that spanking, as you do it, really does help your children learn how to behave, try a small piece of research for yourself. Next time you spank a child who is old enough to talk fluently, wait until the row is over and then ask what the spanking was for. You will almost certainly find that s/he hasn't the least idea. The child will remember every detail of what happened, for weeks and maybe for life, but the nearest s/he will get to why it happened will be "you were cross" or perhaps "I was bad".

However carefully you tell a child why you are spanking, reason always gets lost in the feelings the punishment produces. A baby or

toddler is as amazed and horrified when a beloved parent spansks as you would be if the family dog suddenly turned around and took a chunk out of your leg. At that age a child will often turn to you to make the hurt better.

A child of four or five is overwhelmed with rage which s/he dare not show to you and must bury until it can be taken out on someone or something else.

An older child is angry too but also deeply humiliated. The blow may hurt self-esteem much more than it hurts a backside. Those feelings leave no room for remorse or determination to do better in future. Spanked or beaten children cannot think about what they have done because they are full of what parents have done to them.

Do you, in fact, always know what you spanked your child for? In a lot of families most slaps are not really given to punish one behaviour or encourage another. They are given to relieve the feeling of parents who have been driven "too far" ...

See if you recognize these as spanking situations:

A couple with a tired four year old are shopping. She whines, clings to her mother's coat and gets in her father's way. The third time he trips over her she bursts into tears and her mother's patience snaps. She grabs the child's arm and slaps her legs.

We all know how maddening it can be to try to finish a chore against a child's whining. But could that child possibly understand that she was hit for "being maddening"? As far as she was concerned, she got hurt for crying. And of course her parents didn't get what they wanted either. Stinging legs didn't turn that child into a cheerful, trouble-free companion. They made her bawl.

A mother with a five year old and a toddler struggles onto a crowded train. She finally gets children, bags and coats organized into seats but neither child gives her a moment to relax. The older one asks a stream of loud excited questions while her embarrassed mother tries to hush her. The toddler explores everything including the arm-rest ashtray. Suddenly the ashtray turns itself upside down; ash spills everywhere and the mother wallops the toddler on the hand.

That child wasn't really slapped for touching the ashtray. He couldn't possibly have known that it was an ashtray, let alone that it would spill. He was slapped because the ash was the last straw for a harassed parent. Understandable? Oh yes. A useful piece of 'discipline'? Oh no.

If whining can be maddening, so can the particular noise brothers and sisters make when they are squabbling and fighting. That noise is often

the real reason for slaps that parents think of as "punishment" for hurting little sister..."A lot of parents who don't spank often do think it's right to spank when children hurt each other, or hurt animals, so:

Pinned under his father's arm, the seven year old gets a spanking and as he spans the father says "I will not have you hitting people..."

Does that child really get the message 'hitting people is wrong'? Or does he get a different message such as 'hitting people is a good way to make them do what you want but you'd better be sure they're littler than you...?'

A mother tells me: 'I used to spank Joe quite a lot but once the baby was born I found that every time I spanked him, he spanked her. I spanked him for that too, for a bit, but then I realized I was doing to him exactly what I was telling him not to do to her. So I changed my tune. I said, 'nobody in this house is to hit anyone'.

The Dangers of Slapping and Spanking

Parents who take 'a little tap' for granted, or use 'a quick slap' as part of their planned discipline, naturally don't like to think that their behaviour has any connection with the behaviour of cruel parents who actually abuse their children. But like it or not, we all have to face the truth which is that hurting a child on purpose is hurting a child on purpose, whether it's a little bit occasionally or a lot, quite often.

The difference between 'reasonable punishment' and 'cruel abuse' is only a matter of degree. It's a thin line and, wherever you choose to draw that line in your family, it is easily overstepped.

The risk of overstepping that line lies in the ineffectiveness of slapping as a means of teaching your child, combined with its effectiveness in relieving your feelings.

A 'little tap' doesn't stop your child doing whatever is irritating you so you give a 'quick slap'. One slap doesn't work for more than a minute or two so you try a couple and it's because those slaps don't work either that they can so easily become the spankings which then tip you over that line into beatings or whippings and the headline horrors that turn all our stomachs.

You probably feel that it simply could not happen to you: that there is no way you could ever seriously hurt or injure your child. But do remember that even 'mild' punishment can cause serious injury simply because your child is so much smaller and more fragile than you and because young children's heads are big and heavy in relation to their bodies. A blow aimed at a bottom can catch a child off balance so that s/he falls and hits that head on something. A boxed ear can mean a

burst eardrum. A good shaking can rattle the brain inside the skull so that the child you never meant to hurt ends up with concussion. It happens somewhere every day.

Do also remember that most of the parents who are prosecuted for cruelty would once have rejected the suggestion that they might 'go too far' as indignantly as you do now. They saw themselves as ordinary parents. They meant to do a good job for their children. They got caught up in a vicious circle of trying to discipline those children by force, failing and trying more force. A spiral of violence within the family, along with varying stresses outside it and within themselves, eventually pushed them over that thin line so that now they find themselves beyond the pale.

How Children Learn to Behave

Babies are born human but they aren't born knowing what it takes to be people. To find that out they need a long apprenticeship to people who have already made the grade as adults: parents or the permanent caregivers who stand in for parents.

Like other kinds of apprentices, children learn by being with you; watching and listening to you, imitating you, trying things out and getting them wrong, trying again and getting them right.... One day each of your children will have learned so much that s/he will be ready to function as an independent adult and maybe pass all that learning on to your grandchildren.

Bringing up a child to be a socially acceptable adult is harder work than teaching a youth to be a Master Carpenter because you've got to teach your child everything you know or feel about everything, rather than just your craft skills. But it's easier and more rewarding as well because you don't have to prove yourself to earn your child's love and loyalty. From the earliest months when s/he learns to tell you apart from everyone else, your baby will take it for granted that you are perfect.

Indeed you can't help being perfect for your own child because you're the only Mom or Dad s/he is ever going to have. You don't have to earn his or her love: you have it. You don't even have to work at hanging on to it because, during the first years at least, it's almost impossible to lose it. Your child is totally dependent on you emotionally as well as physically and that gives you such enormous power that you can, and must, use it gently.

Children want to learn because wanting to know is built into them. They particularly want to learn how they should behave because (whether it looks that way today or not!) they want to please you. But

children can only learn at the pace their individual development, mental, physical and emotional, allows. So trying to teach them to behave in ways they can't yet manage, or expecting them to grow up faster than they can, stores up unnecessary misery for everyone. The very quickest way to lose the co-operation which is the foundation of good and easy discipline is to ask the impossible of your child and imply that unless s/he performs it s/he will lose your love.

Babies

Your baby cannot learn any social behaviour because she does not yet know that there is a world full of people who are separate from her. She cannot learn to respect your feelings (such as your desire to spend the night asleep!) because she can't understand that you might feel differently from her. Her waking and crying, her desire to play or suck at 3:00 a.m. certainly will displease you but equally certainly are not meant to. Whatever your baby does or does not do, it is not to get at you.

Toddlers

A young toddler finds it difficult to learn rules and regulations, like leaving the TV alone or not dabbling in his food, because the curiosity which he needs to keep him finding things out is much more developed than his memory. If you keep showing him and telling him what he must do, he will learn. But don't expect him to learn from ten tellings in a day. It may take hundreds of tellings over months.

At two or three your child does know that you and he are separate people but he isn't at all sure that he welcomes that. One bit of him wants to get on with growing up and become independent but another bit of him finds it scary and wishes he were still a babe in your arms. That's why you get shouts of 'me do it' one moment, and floods of tears the next because you've taken him at his word and left him to struggle on his own. Giving him room to grow up but not enough space to feel lonely makes this a difficult stage for you, but it's much worse for him. He gets angry and frustrated and afraid. He may throw tantrums, bite and kick. But it's himself he's angry with: his own smallness, incompetence and fearfulness. The more competent, in control and able to manage he can feel, the calmer and easier to handle he will be. And it's your constant calm and kindly control that will give him those feelings.

Two-year olds cannot be 'good' or 'naughty' on purpose because they do not yet know right from wrong or understand what makes the difference.

Why is it clever to turn out a sandcastle and naughty to turn out your

pudding? Why is it 'dirty' to dabble in wee in a potty and 'clean' to dabble in soapy water in a basin?

Your toddler will be 'good' whenever you can arrange for her to want to do what you want her to do. Want those toys picked up? Tell her she must and she may easily refuse because she doesn't want to pick them up nor understand that she should do things just because you want them done. If she says 'No!' you can scold, shout, slap, reduce her to a jelly of misery, but you'll still have to pick up the toys yourself. But say 'I bet you can't pick all those up before I've tidied your bed...' and there's a good chance she'll do the job with no tears for either of you. And while she's doing it, she's learning that toys live in the toy cupboard rather than on the floor.

Pre-school children

The payoff for helping toddlers want to do as they ought is a pleasanter time for all of you. And that's enormously important. But the payoff later on is more important still.

Toddlers grow up. By the time yours is three or four s/he will be capable of understanding most of your feelings and your rights, will be able to remember most of your instructions, and will be able to foresee the results of many actions. When s/he reaches that stage s/he will be able to be 'good' or 'naughty' on purpose but which s/he chooses will mostly depend on how s/he feels about you.

If your child reaches that stage of development feeling that you are basically loving, approving, and on his side, he will want (most of the time) to please you and he will behave (with many lapses) as you wish. But if he reaches that stage feeling that you are overpowering, incomprehensible and against him, he may decide that trying to please you is hopeless because you never are pleased; that minding when you are cross is too painful because you are cross too often and that loving you is too dangerous because you have so often seemed not to love him.

Schoolchildren

At five, six, or seven your child can 'behave', but don't expect that s/he'll always do so because s/he isn't a saint. Children have periods of moodiness - don't you? They make mistakes, as we all do. And they sometimes do what they want, rather than what they know they should, just as everybody does. In fact children are people, just like the rest of us, but people with a lot still to learn about being grown up.

This is often an age for filthy clothes and filthy language, for defiance, and dumb insolence as well as for real sympathy, generosity and caring. Your child needs you to sort out the bad bits from the good bits

and to tell him or her which is which. S/he doesn't just know that 'f...' is worse than 'fiddle' or that calling an adult a 'silly cow' is quite different from yelling it in the playground. Tell him or her. S/he doesn't just know that the trouble s/he took over your Mother's Day card lit up your whole week either. Tell him or her that, too.

Children need parents to explain to them about grown-up behaviours and feelings but they still need to be allowed to be children. They need assurance that one day they will graduate from apprentice to adult person but that in the meantime, however idiotic their behaviour may be, they themselves are loved and valued and everything you could want in a child.

Positive Discipline - Without Violence

Positive discipline requires confidence from parents: confidence that you really are the most important people in your children's lives; confidence that you can measure up to that as 'good enough parents' and therefore confidence to see bringing children up as a matter of family co-operation rather than adult authority and childish obedience to it.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

People learn much more through co-operation and rewards than through coercion and punishments. Think of adults at work. A stake in the management together with piecework raises productivity because people understand why they're doing what they're doing, and the more they do the more they earn. But a bossy boss who docks wages every time someone is late or goes to the dentist doesn't have at all the same effect. Punishments don't motivate people to try harder or do more; they make people angry and obstinate instead.

Your child is a person and also learns more from rewards than punishments. The rewards don't have to be tangible things like money or sweets because what children really want is parental attention. They want you to notice them, talk to them, share your life with them.

At some stages, of course, a child will want all your attention and whine and cling because s/he can't have it, but at almost every stage children will do whatever they must to get your attention, and if certain behaviours guarantee that you'll ignore the child until they stop, they will stop pretty quickly.

Your Attention is Your Child's Reward

Unfortunately parents don't always use their own attention to encourage 'good' behaviour and discourage 'naughtiness'. In fact parents quite often get it all the wrong way around. While children

aren't doing anything bothersome parents leave them alone on a sort of 'let sleeping dogs lie' principle. They don't volunteer companionship. They don't even join in with any enthusiasm when the children try to share a game or a joke. Eventually those children begin to feel lonely and neglected so they make a bid for attention by interrupting, reciting rude words or fighting. They're right, of course; that's when the parents do pay attention. Perhaps they don't realize that children would always rather have cross attention than be ignored.

Who gets not just attention but candy in the supermarket: the child who is whining or the one who is helping? It's usually the tiresome child who is bribed to co-operate but if there are sweets on offer at all, they should really go to the one who is co-operating already. Who gets taken out to play football on Sunday afternoon: the child who plays quietly while you read the paper or the child who will not give Dad a moment's peace? It's usually the child who is being a pain but it should be the child who is being a pleasure.

Some parents deliberately ration attention and treats for 'fear of spoiling'. And that's sad because it's impossible to 'spoil' a child with too much talk, play and laughter, too many hugs or even too many presents, provided you give them because you want to. "Spoiling" isn't about indulgence and fun, it's about power backed by blackmail. The child who may be at risk of turning into a selfish, 'spoiled' person with no consideration for others isn't necessarily the one who is given a great deal but the one who gets whatever s/he does get by bullying parents to give in against their better judgment. So if you enjoy playing with your children and enjoy their pleasure in the things you do for them and give to them, don't hold back. You only have to think about 'spoiling' when you give in to prevent a scene or give things to make up for a shortage of love or time.

Your child-apprentice makes good use of all the time you can possibly give because as well as enjoying your company, s/he learns from being with you. However busy you are, try not to take shortcuts all the time.

It's quicker to suggest TV to a bored nine-year old than to play a board game with him. It's quicker to close a five-year old's mouth with candy than to listen to her story. It's quicker to give them a slap instead of explanations, too. But while all those shortcuts may help you through a rushed and stressful evening, they will not advance the real journey you are making with your children.

Teaching children how to behave doesn't really mean ensuring that they obey you and behave as you want while you are watching them; it means helping them grow into people who will one day do as they should and behave as they ought when there's nobody watching them

and no chance that they will be found out if they do wrong. That means that you aren't just disciplining them from outside, but trying to help them build the kind of self-discipline we call 'conscience'. To build that, children need to understand each tiny everyday instruction or scolding so that they can fit it into the bigger pattern of how people should 'behave' which is forming inside them.

While you keep children safe, and protect others from them, you are teaching them to keep themselves safe and to care for other people. While you control them, you are helping them to control themselves. And while you explain the moral values - like honesty, justice or respect for others - that lie behind your orders and exhortations, you are offering those values to your children so that they can take them in and make them part of themselves.

Children Model Themselves on Parents

Young children are so focused on parents that even if they spend a lot of time in daycare, or don't see much of one parent, they still do most of their social learning from parents. Your child - let's say a son - will take in every detail of what you are like as a person. He won't only take notice of what you say and do to him but of how you are with everybody else. And he won't only do what you say, he'll do what you do. So don't expect to operate a double-standard, just because you're a grownup and he's only a child.

Do as you would be done by:

You will not get much more politeness, co-operation and honesty from your child than he sees you giving.

Be honest:

He needs to know when and why you are angry or distracted. When there is a row he needs to know what really caused it. When you are wrong, he needs you to admit it and, far from losing respect for you if you say "I'm sorry I was cross, it wasn't really your fault", he'll respect you more and be the more inclined to apologize himself when he does wrong.

Always explain:

Unless it's an emergency, it's an insult to a child's intelligence to expect him to carry out unexplained orders and it's a waste of opportunities for learning, too. It's only knowing why you want him to do something today that lets him apply the same idea tomorrow, so he can only learn if you will explain.

Be positive:

Just as rewards work better than punishments, so 'do' works better than 'don't' and requests for action work better than forbidding any. 'Don't take that cookie in there' makes him bristle with argument; 'please stay at the table until you've finished your cookie' gives him a positive course of action that he controls and you approve.

Ration 'dont's':

Or he simply will stop hearing them. "Don't" works best for actual rules that you want him to keep whatever the circumstances, like 'Don't climb in that tree; it's dangerous. Try not to make rules that vary with circumstances and therefore sometimes have to be broken. "Don't interrupt while I'm talking," for example, is a silly rule because you'd want him to interrupt if he needed the toilet or the baby was crying. Turn it into a positive request instead: 'please wait a minute until I've finished talking'.

Remember:

He can't keep your rules if you don't. "Never cross the road without a grownup" is an excellent safety rule until the day you ask him to 'run over and get my paper...'

Practical Ideas for Avoiding Spanking

Remind yourselves that you spend half your time trying to stop your baby crying so causing crying is against your own interests.

* **You don't have to slap hands** that get into danger. Grabbing them is quicker and attracts just as much attention.

* **Force isn't the best way** to get something from a baby who will hold on tighter the more you pull. You don't need a slap, though. Offering a swap always works.

* **Baby-proofing living space** is really worthwhile. In Sweden all young families get free safety-gadgets to 'reduce family friction'. In North America you'll have to buy and fit them yourself but every stair-gate, fire-guard or cupboard lock is worthwhile. If there's nothing dangerous or breakable in reach, there's not much to quarrel about.

* **If you ever feel your temper going**, make sure the baby's in a safe place like a cot or playpen and leave the room until you've cooled down. The baby may cry at being left but that's better than crying at being hit...

Toddlers Try to avoid direct clashes. They teach toddlers nothing and bring you down to toddler level. Stay adult and remember that you are much cleverer than your child. You can almost always find a diversion or distraction.

* **Use your superior size** and strength to defuse situations rather than to hurt. A child who won't come out of the bath can be lifted. A child who won't walk with you can be carried. A child who hits out at you or the dog can be safely held and told 'No. That hurts...hitting's horrid...'

* **If you're driven to distraction**, your child will not listen to you and you've started to deliver a slap, divert the blow to the table or your own knee. The sound will interrupt the behaviour and the child will hear what you say far better than if s/he was crying.

* **Try not to join in tantrums**. If you are at home, try turning your back to the child and ignoring the scene. Singing to yourself may help distract you from the noise and your own desire to yell back. If you're in public and embarrassed, bodily remove the child to the nearest private screaming place. Do be ready with comfort when the yells change to tears, though. Real tantrums terrify toddlers.

* **Don't even hope** that your toddler will play safely without adult attention for more than a few minutes. Instead, cultivate eyes in the back of your head, the ability to do two (or five) things at the same time and at least some adult company for yourself. Then ask yourself 'Has today had any fun bits in it? How often have I heard that gurgly laugh?'

Older Children

Everybody gets angry or fed up with children sometimes. Keeping your hands off your child doesn't mean that you have to bottle up your feelings. If a child's driving you crazy, try clapping your hands together as loudly as you can. The noise will interrupt whatever's going on and the only person you may hurt is you!

* **If you've started** to say 'stop that this minute or I'll...', you may have time to substitute 'scream' for slap you'. Do it, as loudly as you can. Your child will be surprised and impressed and your tension will vanish.

* **If you're child is being silly**- teasing, provoking, going too far, and refusing to listen or take you seriously, don't waste energy on a crescendo of unheeded shouts that end up in a slap. Crouch down so your two faces are on the same level; grasp the child firmly by the upper arms so s/he cannot avoid looking at you and then talk. If the 'conversation' starts out with a yell, well, that's a lot better than a blow.

* **If you feel irritation** building inside you but your child hasn't really done anything, try removing yourself for five minutes' peace and self-indulgence. You could turn on the radio, put on some makeup, gaze out of the window or run around the garden. It doesn't matter what you do as long as it enables you to simmer down into a 'let's start

again' frame of mind.

Removing yourself means that your child loses your attention so unless s/he's playing with friends that may be a kind of punishment just as it is with younger children. You're saying 'I just don't want to be in here with you until you can be nicer/quieter/gentler or whatever.

* **If you still feel you must punish your child**, do make sure that it follows directly from the 'crime' so s/he has a chance to learn the lesson you mean to teach. If a child rides a bike onto a road you've forbidden, it's logical to take the bike away for the afternoon or longer. You're teaching that bikes can be dangerous, that you're concerned for the child's safety, and that you'll enforce safety rules for as long as they're needed. A different punishment, such as 'no TV' has nothing to do with safety or bikes. Hours later when the programmes begin and the row is forgotten, the punishment will teach nothing. As for a spanking, nothing will make your child believe that you do it for his or her sake. "I hurt you because I don't want you hurt" is too devious a message for any child or adult.

You won't often need these formal punishments, though. When your child's being tiresome, you ignore him or her. When you can't ignore the behaviour it makes you cross and you say so. Children want your approval, so honest disapproval is usually effective, especially if you follow it with a chance for the child to wipe the slate clean and start again: 'All right then, let's clear up the mess together and then we'll say no more about it...'

Above all - do talk. The people who say that children prefer quick slaps to boring lectures don't realize that children aren't bored when parents tell them what they think and feel and want. They want adults to treat them the way other people treat each other - and they don't want to be hurt any more than adults do. Much is made of the fact that other animals control their young with nips and blows, but are you rearing a lion cub or a person? Human beings have the unique advantage of being able to talk. **Let's do it.**

[\[Home\]](#) [\[Top\]](#)

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Everybody gets angry or fed up with childr€ F• w F•

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Spanking and the Wall of Silence

Excerpt from *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*, by Alice Miller, London: Virago Press Ltd., 1991. (pp. 22-23).

...Since discovering my own truth I know that a similar fate has befallen countless others even though they may not--or not yet--remember the facts. Some clearly can, as is evident from the proliferating reports of child abuse from all over the world. Their authors do occasionally receive positive responses from people who, though they themselves may till then not have dared to look back, having been dissuaded at every turn, now feel encouraged by such revelations to face the history of their own childhood. Frequently, however, they run up against a wall of almost unimaginable ignorance. This wall is especially impenetrable in intellectual circles, whose members have armed themselves with all kinds of theories against the return of the repressed and barricaded themselves behind them. All kinds of superannuated, though as yet unexposed, theories are stylized into intellectual systems and pedagogic models. And so long as students meekly and uncritically tolerate the eradication of the truth, these theories will continue to be taught at our universities.

Students who have sought to treat the subject of child abuse in their final papers have, I know, generally had discouraging experiences in their discussions with professors. Those they consulted usually changed the subject as fast as they could, were evasive, mocking, or simply embarrassed. As a rule they advised their students not to pursue the subject. Students who persist in expressing an interest in the subject have even had to reckon with chicanery. The extent to which they can withstand such maneuvers depends on their own emotional development.

In one manuscript, which has sadly waited for years for publication, Lloyd de Mause describes the tragic fate of a brilliant scientist whose pioneering work about childhood in the United States of America was so ridiculed by press and academia alike that he finally committed suicide. (See Glenn Davis, New York, 1976). So distraught was he to see his insights rejected by the father figure at the university, that he took his own life. Had he been able to call his own father into question he would have been able to see through the fears of those who rejected his work. But in the fifties, that was even more difficult than it is today.

Such chicanery reveals the destructive nature of repression in the life of an adult and in the activities of many intellectuals. Hard as it is to believe, in the entire world there is not one single faculty in which a degree is offered in the study of psychic injuries in childhood. Isn't this an extraordinary state of affairs, when one realizes that almost all of us are victims of the mistreatment, open or disguised, referred to euphemistically as "childrearing"? Every one of us, I am sure, could recount volumes if we ceased to tolerate the wall of silence in us and dared to feel.

All too many people have reason not to wish to be reminded of the harrowing experiences of childhood...

Return to [Table of Contents](#).



CHILD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: SPANKING

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Topics in this essay:

- [Spanking quotations](#)
 - [The issue](#)
 - [Current legal status](#)
 - [The case against spanking](#)
 - [The case for spanking](#)
 - [Results of some studies](#)
 - [Recommendations by pro-spanking advocates](#)
 - [Open letter to President Clinton](#)
 - [United Nations convention on the rights of the child](#)
 - [Recent developments](#)
 - [Useful books](#)
 - [References: opposed to spanking; promoting spanking; other](#)
-

Quotations:

"I also believe the scriptural reference to the "rod" best corresponds to a switch or perhaps a flexible paddle. " [Mark Benedict, Christian Family Foundations](#)

"Children need discipline but not hitting." Dawn Walker, [Canadian Institute of Child Health](#)

"I have heard terrible stories of children becoming spoiled, drug using, atheists if they aren't spanked." [Sharon](#)

The Issue:

The restriction of parents hitting their children is expected to become one of the main topics of debate between religious conservatives and liberals during the next decade.

The level of state sanctioned violence is gradually decreasing in society. In the past:

- Slave-owners could whip slaves. This was abolished with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863
- Masters could whip indentured servants
- Husbands could beat wives with little chance of being arrested; this immunity has been recently reduced in most areas
- The public could commit violence against people found guilty and held captive in a pillory. This was abolished in most US states in 1839; in 1905. Delaware was the last state to eliminate stocks

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN (SPANKING)

- Jail guards could cane or whip prisoners. The last flogging in Britain was in 1967; in the US it was in 1952, also in Delaware.
- Ship officers could flog sailors until it was abolished by the US Senate in 1850; it was banned in Britain in 1957.
- Boxers were expected to beat each other senseless and often damage each other's brains
- Parents and guardians could use corporal punishment on their children.
- School teachers could use corporal punishment on their students. Laws were passed to abolish spanking in British state-run schools in 1986, and in privately funded schools in 1998.

In 1996, only the last three categories are still legal in North America. And the degree of violence is in decline:

- The use of violence against students in US public schools dropped from 1.4 million students in 1981 to 500,000 in 1991. 27 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico currently (1999-AUG) ban corporal punishment in their school systems. ¹¹
- A survey of US parents shows a drop in the use of spanking as the main disciplinary method from 59% in 1962 to 19% in 1993. Parents now prefer using time-outs (38%) and lecturing (24%).
- Surveys showed that over 90% of parents spanked their children in the 1930's. Dr. Benjamin Spock originally endorsed spanking, but then changed his mind in the late 1980's.
- In 1994, 70% of American adults agreed that it is "**sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.**" Also in 1994, the **National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse** found that only 49% of American adults had hit or spanked their child in the previous year.
- Drs. T. Berry Brazelton, Penelope Leach, and Benjamin Spock, probably the most influential child psychologists and pediatricians, all recommend against spanking. so does the **American Psychological Association** and the **National Association of Social Workers**. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** seems to be having difficulty reaching a consensus.

Some argue that if we are to promote a less violent culture, then we should ban all inter-personal violence. Others believe that spanking children is a useful form of discipline that does not harm the child if it is done carefully and with love.

The Current Legal Status of Corporal Punishment

Existing laws in most countries, states and provinces prohibit physical assaults. But these same laws often have "notwithstanding" clauses that permit assaults:

- in a boxing ring
- of reasonable intensity in a parent-child situation
- of reasonable intensity in a teacher-student situation

Corporal punishment in the home and school are banned in a 9 European countries: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Norway and Sweden. Bans are currently being debated by the Governments of Germany, Ireland, Poland, Spain and Switzerland. A private member's bill by Canadian Member of Parliament, **Svend Robinson**, proposes the repeal of Section 43 of the **Canadian Criminal Code** which permits parents to use "**reasonable force**" when disciplining children. About 27 states in the US prohibit corporal punishment in public schools.

The Case Against Corporal Punishment

There are many arguments against spanking:

- **It is ineffective:** Spanking a child will stop the child from misbehaving for the moment. But studies have shown that the child's compliance will only last for a short time; corporal punishment actually increases the child's non-compliant behavior in the future.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN (SPANKING)

- **It can lead to abuse:** Because a spanking works for a while, the parent often repeats the spanking whenever the child misbehaves. Corporal punishment may then become a standard response to any misbehavior. This can lead to increasingly frequent and harsher spanking which can lead exceed the "reasonable force" threshold and become abuse. According to the Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse, "**85% of all cases of physical abuse result from some form of over-discipline through the use of corporal punishment**". Each year about 44 Canadian children are known to have been killed by family members; 35 of them by parents. The figures for the United States is probably about 10 times higher.
- **It can unintentionally cause serious damage:**
 - Boxing on the ear can burst an eardrum.
 - Shaking can cause a concussion, whiplash, blindness, serious brain damage, or even death;
 - Spanking can injure muscles, the sciatic nerve, pelvis, coccyx (tail bone), genitals or spine.
 - Hitting a child's hands can injure bones, blood vessels, joints and ligaments; it can induce premature osteoarthritis.
 - A child who is hit can accidentally fall and seriously injure themselves.
- **It trains a child to use violence:** Children who are often spanked learn that it is acceptable for the strong to use force against the weak. The concept that "Might makes right" is regularly reinforced. They have an increased likelihood of becoming more aggressive towards their siblings, their fellow students, and (later in life) against their spouses and their own children. Violence as a way of behaving is a learned response.
- **Slapping or any other type of force used on the buttocks is a sexual violation:** The buttocks are an erogenous zone of the human body. Their nerve system is connected to the body's sexual nerve centers. Slapping them can involuntarily trigger feelings of sexual pleasure which become mixed with the pain. This can lead to confusion in the child's mind which influences the way in which they express their sexuality as adults.
- **Spanking lowers a child's IQ:** A [study](#) at the University of New Hampshire, released in 1998-JUL, found that spanking children slows down their intellectual development. A study of 960 children showed that those who were rarely or never spanked had an average IQ of 102 (above average), whereas the frequently spanked children had an IQ of 98 (below average).

Studies of mass murderers, "ordinary" murderers, rapists etc. generally show that they were victims as children of seriously abusive punishment during childhood. A preliminary study of inmates on death row of a US prison found that **all** had been so seriously abused as children that they had probably suffered brain injuries. If serious abuse causes such extreme anti-social behavior, perhaps milder forms of punishment also contribute to violence in society.

Many feminists, who have been battling spousal abuse for decades, are proposing a complete ban on violence as one way of reducing battering within the family. A 1995 Canadian study funded by the Federal government found that corporal punishment of children is associated with increased:

- level of aggression by the child
- frequency of child delinquency
- frequency of violence and crime in later life
- chance of child abuse

The Case for Corporal Punishment

We have been unable to locate any credible research material that finds corporal punishment of children to be useful. The material that we have found indicates that it is ineffective and counter-productive. However, punishment is recommended in the Bible.

The phrase "**spare the rod and spoil the child**" is often incorrectly attributed to the Christian Bible. It was first written in a poem by Samuel Butler in 1664.

All of the Biblical quotations advocating corporal punishment of children are taken from the book of Proverbs in the King James Version of the Bible. They were written by King Solomon, and presumably reflect his parenting beliefs with respect to his son Rehoboam:

- Prov 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (diligently)."
- Prov 19:18: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."
- Prov 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."
- Prov 23:13: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die."
- Prov 23:14: "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (Shoel)."
- Prov 29:15: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

An additional verse from the New Testament is occasionally cited as justification for physical punishment of children by parents. But it is not clear whether the discipline, referred to at the end of the verse, refers to corporal punishment or to some other form of correction (e.g. removal of privileges):

- Hebrews 12:6-7: "...the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?"

The Bible itself records the negative effect that Solomon's parenting style had on his son Rehoboam. He became a widely hated ruler after his father's death. He had to make a hasty retreat to avoid being assassinated by his own people:.

- 1 Kings 12:13-14: "And the king [Rehoboam] answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." (ASV)
- 1 Kings 12:18: "Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem." (ASV)

These same events are recorded in 2 Chronicles 10:6-19.

Some religious liberals interpret these passages as accurately reflecting Solomon's parenting style, and the devastating consequences of corporal punishment on children. But they reject the concept that the passages in Proverbs represent God's intent for parents.

Robert Ingersoll, a well known 19th century free-thinker, who wrote in 1891 about King Solomon:

"To me it has always been a matter of amazement why civilized people, living in the century of Darwin and Humboldt, should quote as authority the words of Solomon, a murderer, an ingrate, an idolater, and a polygamist -- a man so steeped and sodden in ignorance that he really believed he could be happy with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines."

On the other hand, many Fundamentalists and other Evangelicals, who believe in the **inerrancy** of the Bible feel that the above passages place upon them a religious obligation to physically punish rebellious children. A common theme among the most conservative Evangelical sources is that discipline of children is important from an early age, and that corporal punishment is the only effective method to be used. Discipline and spanking are often closely linked; the terms are often used interchangeably. Non-violent parenting techniques are often not emphasized. They often promote the false image that without spanking and hitting, children will grow up completely undisciplined.

One Evangelical source points out that a child who is forced to accept punishment from her/his parents will be more likely to accept it from God as an adult.

Results of some studies

A number of researchers have attempted to link spanking with problems in the "spankees" later behavior -- either during childhood, or adulthood. Some seem to have found links between "corporal punishment and lower IQs, teenage delinquency, adult criminality,

marital conflict and spousal abuse." ⁴⁵ Other research papers found no such relationships. As in many studies of this type, objectivity is often missing; the results frequently confirm the researchers original beliefs.

Some studies contain the following weaknesses:

- Some include subjects who have been physically and/or sexually abused. Abuse victims will generally show a much higher level of psychiatric, behavioral and addiction problems in adulthood. By mixing these victims with others who have only been spanked, the results may be skewed.
- None of the studies that we have examined prove a cause-and-effect link between spanking and later problems:
 - A pattern of harsh parental discipline might be the root causative factor of problems in adulthood. That technique might make the parent more likely to use spanking.
 - The propensity for later adult problems might have been present during early childhood. This might have made the subjects more prone to behavioral problems as children. This, in turn, may have driven their parents to try spanking as a means of control.

Some recent studies include:

- **Anti-social behavior:** The **Family Research Laboratory** of the University of New Hampshire conducted a large study involving over 3,000 mothers of 3 to 5 year old children during the late 1980's. The women were interviewed in 1986, 1988 and 1990. They found that 63% of the mothers had spanked their child at least once during the previous week. Among those that spanked, they hit their children a little over 3 times per week, on average. They found that the children which were spanked the most as 3 to 5 year olds exhibited higher levels of anti-social behavior when observed 2 and 4 years later. This included higher levels of hitting siblings, hitting other children in school, defying parents and ignoring parental rules. Dr. Murray Straus, the Co-director of the Laboratory noted how ironic it is that the behaviors for which parents spank children are liable to get worse as a result of the spanking.
- **Lower children's IQ:** The **Family Research Laboratory** of the **University of New Hampshire** released a study which showed that the more often a child is spanked, the lower they score in IQ tests four years later. Their paper was described by researcher Dr. Murray Straus at the **World Congress of Sociology** on 1998-AUG-1 in Montreal, Quebec. They examined 960 American children who were between one and four years old between 1986 and 1990. The researchers do not attribute the lower IQ tests directly to physical injuries sustained during the spanking. Rather, they believe that parents who do not spank are forced to use more reasoning and explaining while disciplining the child. **"Some parents think this is a waste of time, but research shows that such verbal parent-child interactions enhance the child's cognitive ability."** 13% of the parents studied reported spanking their children 7 or more times a week; the average was 3.6 times. 27% reported using no physical punishment. Those children who were spanked frequently averaged 98 on their IQ tests. This is a below average IQ rating. Those who were rarely or never spanked scored 102. This is an above-average rating. (Individuals with an IQ in the range of 85 to 115 are frequently considered to be of normal intelligence). Ms. Dawn Walker, executive director of the **Canadian Institute of Child Health** commented: **"We know that children who are under the threat of violence or aggression develop a fight-or-flight response system that has an impact on creativity and imagination, both of which could influence their IQ...Children need discipline but not hitting."** ⁴²
- **Psychiatric and addiction:** Dr. Harriet McMillan of **McMaster University** in Hamilton, ON Canada led a 6 person team which studied the possible association between childhood spanking and subsequent behavior problems in adulthood. ⁴⁴ They based their study on data collected as part of a 1990 population health survey by the **Ontario Ministry of Health** of 10,000 adults in the province. 5,000 of the subjects had been asked questions about spanking during childhood. Unlike many previous studies, the researchers deleted from the sample group anyone who recalled being physically or sexually abused. This left adults who had only been spanked and/or slapped during childhood. Incidences of adult disorders were:

Adult disorder	Never spanked	Rarely spanked	Sometimes/often spanked
Anxiety	16.3%	18.8%	21.3%

Major depression	4.6%	4.8%	6.9%
Alcohol abuse or addiction	5.8%	10.2%	13.2%
More than one disorder *	7.5%	12.6%	16.7%

* More than one disorder included illicit drug abuse, addictions & antisocial behavior.

Jim Sclater of **Focus on the Family (Canada) Association** commented: "We're always very suspicious of studies that come from the other side that predictably are looking for anything that could be construed as saying spanking leads to abuse."

Recommendations by Pro-Spanking Advocates

Most of the older books on child-raising advocated corporal punishment as a normal disciplinary method. More modern books available in conservative Christian bookstores still do. But most current books written from a secular or a liberal religious perspective do not generally recommend spanking.

All of the "pro-spanking" sites on the Internet that we have been able to find are written from a Christian Fundamentalist or other Evangelical perspective. ^{22 to 29} A common thread running through some of these sites is the false concept that the only alternative to spanking is to impose no discipline at all.

The **Family Research Council** has prepared a very thoughtful analysis of corporal punishment from a conservative Christian perspective. ²² They cannot abandon spanking entirely, because that would imply that the above passages from Proverbs are not valid. But they seem to be quite aware of the hazards of spanking - particularly the possibility of corporal punishment escalating in intensity and frequency until it becomes serious abuse.

Although they advocate spanking as a discipline method, they recommend that its use be severely restricted. They have in fact moved a long distance towards banning spanking entirely:

- they differentiate between "**abusive hitting and nonabusive spanking.**"
 - they recommend that verbal corrections, time outs, and logical consequences be the disciplinary methods of choice
 - spanking should be reserved for instances where non-compliance persists, and only if non-physical disciplinary methods have failed. "**For very compliant children, milder forms of correction will suffice and spanking may never be necessary.**"
 - the child should receive "**at least as much encouragement and praise for good behavior as correction for problem behavior.**"
 - "**to avoid public humiliation or embarrassment,**" it should always be done in private
 - spanking should be restricted to a range of ages. It "**is inappropriate before 15 months of age and is usually not necessary until after 18 months. It should be less necessary after 6 years, and rarely, if ever, used after 10 years of age.**"
 - if spanking does not seem to work, a parent should **never** increase the severity of hitting. Professional help should be sought, and/or other disciplinary techniques tried
 - they recommend a single slap to the hand of a young child, and one or two spanks to the buttocks for older children
 - they recommend hugging the child afterwards.
-

Open Letter to President Clinton

Many dozens of medical and social service organizations have written [open letter](#) to the President of the US, asking him to promote legislation which would ban corporal punishment in American schools.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Canada is a signatory to this convention. All of the member states of the United Nations have also signed it, except for Somalia and the United States.

The Convention defines a **child** as any "human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

Article 19:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and education measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement."

Recent developments about spanking, worldwide

- **1998-MAR-24 Arkansas:** "Mitchell Johnson", a 13 year old student in Jonesboro AR, is rumored to have brought a pocket knife to school on 1998-MAR-23. He was caught and was "paddled" by school authorities. At about the same time, his girlfriend broke up with him because he had become interested in gang membership. On MAR-24, he allegedly pulled the school fire alarm and triggered an evacuation of teachers and students from the school. He and another male student, age 11, allegedly ambushed the people as they left the buildings. Four students were killed; all girls. One female teacher was also killed. Another 11 individuals were injured. The paddling and abuse may have triggered this mass murder, or it may have been totally unrelated to it. There are allegations that Mitchell had been repeatedly sexually molested when he was 6 and 7 years of age, at a day-care center.
- **1998-MAR-25 Britain:** Corporal punishment of students by teachers had been abolished in England in government-funded schools in 1986. On 1998-MAR-25, by a vote of 211 to 15, Parliament passed an amendment to the Schools bill which will become law in 1998-Summer. It will abolish corporal punishment in privately-funded schools. "Families for Discipline," a pro-spanking lobby group, is considering appealing in European courts to defend the rights of parents to delegate to schools the authority to punish their children. Don Foster, education spokesperson for the Liberal Democratic Party said: "It is my clear view that corporal punishment is something that is wrong in principle, is barbaric and is inhuman."
- **1999-SEP-16: Massachusetts:** Donald Cobble is a pastor at the Christian teaching and Worship Center in Woburn MA. He has been accused of child abuse because he occasionally spanked his 11-year-old fully-clothed son with a leather belt. The MA Department of Social Services filed a report on the father because they feel his discipline methods raised a "substantial risk of physical injury." Cobble and his attorney deny the assessment. Cobble told an interviewer: "...I am a firm believer that that [spanking] is a necessary part of raising a child." He claims that he spans his son less than once a month; the state claims that he does it about three times a month. He commented: "I happen to live in the most liberal state. They call [the DSS] a child protection agency. It's more like a child protection industry, and this state spends disproportionate amounts of money in this industry. They have just gone wild on this thing and pressed it to where I had to fight it. I didn't get into this to fight it. I tried to get out of it, but it just kept growing to where I had no choice but to fight it." 30

- **1999-SEP-1: England:** The **School Standards and Framework Act** came into force on this day. This bans the use of corporal punishment in all British schools. Spanking had been prohibited in 1986 within state-run schools. The new law extended this ban to private schools.

Phil Williamson, headmaster of the **Christian Fellowship School** in Liverpool is leading a movement to restore the right of religious private schools to hit children. He regards spanking as part of the Judeo-Christian heritage. **"If it's done in the right context, then children know that for somebody who loves them to smack them, something must have gone really wrong."** His school hits girls with a strap and beats boys with a paddle. His group plans to appeal to the **European Court of Human Rights** to restore their rights to hit children. Meanwhile, the **Independent Schools' Joint Council**, which represents over 80% of independent schools is strongly opposed to corporal punishment.

Britain was the last country in Europe to prohibit corporal punishment in schools. That country had abolished birching as a legal punishment in 1948, flogging in the Royal Navy in 1957, and beatings in prisons and Borstals (prisons for young offenders) in 1967.

- **1999-OCT:** The **Canadian Foundation for Youth and the Law**, a children's rights group has challenged the constitutionality of section 43 of the **Criminal Code of Canada**. This is the section of the Code that allows parents to use reasonable force to discipline their children. The case will be heard in early 1999-DEC.

Useful Books.

These books recommend discipline techniques other than spanking, except as noted.

- Elizabeth Crary, **"Without spanking or spoiling: a practical approach to toddler and preschool guidance,"** Parenting Press (1993). [Read reviews or order this book safely from Amazon.com online bookstore](#)
- James C. Dobson, **"The strong-willed child: Birth through adolescence,"** (1992). [Review/order this book](#) [Author's note: In this biblically based book, Dobson recommends spanking as a discipline tool from the age of 18 months. Reviewers of his book seem to either love it or hate it]
- James C. Dobson, **"The new dare to discipline,"** Tyndale House, (1996). [Review/order this book](#) [See comments above]
- R.L. Forehand & Nicholas Long, "parenting the strong-willed child: The clinically proven five-week program for parents of two to six year-olds," NTC. [Review/order this book](#)
- Philip Greven, **Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse,** Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., (1990). [Review/order this book](#)

An excerpt:

"Corporal punishments always figure prominently in the roots of adolescent and adult aggressiveness, especially in those manifestations that take antisocial form, such as delinquency and criminality. Assaults upon children by adults in the name of discipline are the primary familial models for aggression, assaults, and other forms of antisocial behavior, delinquency, and crime that emerge when children grow up.

- I.A. Hyman, **"The case against spanking: How to discipline your child without hitting,"** Jossey-Bass Publishers (1997) [Review/order this book](#)
- M.M. Lefkowitz et al, **Growing up to be violent: A longitudinal Study of the Development of Aggression,** Pergamon Press, New York, NY (1977). This describes one of the few longitudinal studies that have been done.
- J.Q. Wilson & R.J. Herrnstein, **Crime and Human Nature** Simon and Schuster, New York, NY (1986). As of 1999-SEP, is available at [Barns and Noble](#) for \$116
- Jerry Wychoff, et al., **"Discipline without shouting or spanking: Practical solutions to the most common preschool behavior problems,"** Simon & Schuster, (1985) [Review/order this book](#)

References Opposed to Spanking

1. Robert G. Ingersoll, a famous freethinker from the 19th Century wrote an article "Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?" in response to an article in the **American Review**, 1891-DEC. See: http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/
2. The No Spanking Page has an amazingly complete collection of "anti-spanking" material is at: <http://www.cei.net/~rcox/nospan.html>
3. Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE) is a non-profit organization promoting zero-tolerance for assault and battery against children since 1978. They have a website "Project NoSpank" which contains many links. See: <http://silcon.com/~ptave> Included is an essay by by Tom Johnson: "The Sexual Dangers of Spanking children" at: <http://silcon.com/~ptave/sexdngr.htm>
4. **Parenttime magazine** has a column called "Your Growing Child. One issue dealt with spanking: <http://www.pathfinder.com>
5. "End Physical Punishment of Children" (EPOCH) has a web page at: <http://www.stophitting.com/EPOCH.html>
6. A site which has book reviews, discussions of selected parenting topics, and which encourages sharing amongst parents is Parent's Place, the **Parenting Resource Center on the Web**[™]. They are at: <http://www.parentsplace.com/>
7. Kathryn Kvols, President of the **International Network for Children and Families** has a site promoting "9 Things to do Instead of Spanking" at: <http://www.positiveparenting.com/nospank.html>
8. Jan Hunt of The **Natural Child Project** has written an essay: "Ten Reasons Not to Hit Your Kids" at http://www.naturalchild.com/jan_hunt/tenreasons.html
9. Parent Soup, "We have found that in the Christian community not spanking is a real issue," <http://www.parentsoup.com/experts/sears/DJuly11.html>
10. The American Academy of Pediatrics opposes the physical punishment of children in school. See: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/wwestand.htm>
11. The AAP maintains a record of the status of physical punishment in various U.S. states. See: <http://www.aap.org/member/corpchrt.htm>
12. The Center for Effective Discipline (CED) "provides educational information to the public on the effects of corporal punishment of children and alternatives to its use." See: <http://www.stophitting.com/> They coordinate two organizations: NCACPS (National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools) and EPOCH-USA (End Physical Punishment of Children). They sponsor a "SpankOut Day, USA" at the end of Child Abuse Prevention Month (April) each year.

Conservative Christian References Which Promote Spanking

21. There are two likely sources of material that advocates corporal punishment of children: public libraries which might stock older books on parenting, and books on parenting available in Evangelical Christian bookstores
22. The **Family Research Council**, a fundamentalist Christian organization, has an article "Spare the Rod? New Research Challenges Spanking Critics" at <http://www.frc.org/frc/fampol/fp96jpa.html> They have materials available on this and other social matters that are written from a Fundamentalist Christian perspective. They are located at 801 G Street NW, Washington, DC, 20001. Toll-free number is 1-800-225-4008.
23. A Web site "Sex Facts from the Bible" has an essay: "Guidelines for Spanking Your Children" at: <http://www.gelservices.com/spank.html>
24. **Christian Family Foundation** has a section on their Web site devoted to this topic. See: http://www.2b4.com/family/Best_Of_Web/Spanking.htm, http://www.2b4.com/family/Best_Of_Web/The-Rod.htm, and http://www.2b4.com/family/Best_Of_Web/Discipli.htm
25. Mack and Brenda Timberlake, "The Spanking Dilemma" at: <http://www.strang.com/cm/stories/cj197111.htm>
26. **Fundamental Baptist News Service**: "Study says Spanking is Destructive" <http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud/fbns/study.htm>

- 27. Mark Benedict, "Ann Landers Advises Against Spanking, But What Does God's Word Teach" <http://www.2b4.com/family/family/ann-land.htm>
 - 28. Christian Answers Network "When is a child old enough to be spanked and how should it be done?" <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-flc/flc-f001.html>
 - 29. It's In the Bible, "Child Training/Parenting" http://www.wolfe.net/~bibline/info/child_training.html
 - 30. Conservative News Service, "MA court tries father for spanking child." Online at Maranatha Christian Journal, <http://www.mcjonline.com/news/news3420.htm>
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Other Information:

- 41. Colin Farrell maintains a "World Corporal Punishment Research Website" about corporal punishment in schools, prisons, etc. See: <http://www.corpun.com>
- 42. Jane Gadd, "Spanked children suffer intellectually," The Globe and Mail, Toronto ON, 1998-JUL-30
- 43. P.L. Poelstra, "Corporal Punishment," at: <http://people.biola.edu/faculty/paulp/>. This site contains links to various studies that are critical of anti-spanking studies.
- 44. Harriet McMillan, Article (title unknown) in the Canadian Medical Association Journal for 1999-OCT-5.
- 45. Sean Fine, "Study links spanking to future alcohol abuse," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 1999-OCT-5, Pages A1 & A13

Latest update: 1999-OCT-5
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Go to the previous page, or choose:





The Debate over Spanking

by Dawn Ramsburg

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Source

ERIC
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Elementary and
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Urbana, Ill.

Spanking is one of the most controversial discipline methods. On one side of the debate are parents who believe it is all right to spank their children. On the other side are those who think that children should never be spanked. Somewhere in the middle are parents who believe that spanking should only be used in particular instances (e.g., when the child runs into the street). Part of the reason for the debate is that parents and experts often define spanking differently. To some, spanking means "slapping a child on the buttocks" (Straus, 1995, p. 5), while others consider spanking a generic term for any corporal punishment that does not cause an injury, such as slapping a child's hand for touching something forbidden or dangerous.

The purpose of this digest is to explore some of the reasons for spanking (using the general definition of any corporal punishment that does not cause an injury), to examine the effectiveness of spanking, and to suggest alternative discipline methods.

Contents

Reasons For Spanking

[Reasons For Spanking](#)

[Effectiveness Of Spanking](#)

[Alternatives To Spanking](#)

[Suggestions For Parents Of Infants](#)

[Suggestions For Parents Of Toddlers](#)

[Suggestions For Parents Of Older Children](#)

While many adults would argue that hitting people is wrong, spanking children continues to be used as an acceptable form of discipline because many parents think spanking will teach children not to do things that are forbidden, stop them quickly when they are being irritating, and encourage them to do what they should (Leach, 1996). Some parents also believe that the nonphysical forms of discipline, like time-out, do not work (Samalin & Whitney, 1995). Spanking is also a practice used more in some areas of the country than others (primarily in the southern United States) and in some cultures more than others (Flynn, 1996; Scarr, 1995).

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Effectiveness Of Spanking

While spanking may relieve a parent's frustration and stop misbehavior briefly, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (1995), researchers suggest that spanking may be the least effective discipline method. To test this hypothesis, researchers surveyed parents, with the assumption that if spanking worked, children who were spanked would learn to behave better over time so that they would need punishing less frequently (Leach, 1996). However, the results showed that families who start spanking before their children are a year old are just as likely to spank their 4-year-old children as often as families who do not start

spanking until later. Thus, children appear not to be learning the lessons parents are trying to teach by spanking.

Spanking may be ineffective because it does not teach an alternative behavior (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1995). In fact, children usually feel resentful, humiliated, and helpless after being spanked (Samalin & Whitney, 1995). The primary lesson they learn appears to be that they should try harder not to get caught.

Spanking also sends the wrong message to children (Samalin & Whitney, 1995). Spanking communicates that hitting is an acceptable way to solve problems, and that it is all right for a big person to strike a smaller one. In addition, when children are spanked, they may know that they have done something wrong, but in many cases, they are too young to understand the lesson. It is a very difficult message for any adult or child to understand: "I hurt you because I don't want you hurt."

Finally, when spanking is the primary discipline method used, it may have some potentially harmful long-term effects such as increasing the chances of misbehavior, aggression, violent or criminal behavior; impaired learning; and depression (Straus, 1995).

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

[Suggestions For](#)

[All Ages](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[For More](#)

[Information](#)

Forums

[Raising our Kids](#)

Related Articles

[Pediatricians](#)

[Respond to](#)

[Media Reports on Discipline](#)

[How to Teach Your Children Discipline](#)

[Positive](#)

[Discipline](#)

Alternatives To Spanking

One reason parents spank is that they are not aware of other effective strategies for changing children's undesirable behavior. To be effective, discipline that is appropriate for a child's age should be used. Ineffective methods are often based on unrealistic expectations about what children are capable of learning. Parents may find the following age-appropriate discipline suggestions useful alternatives to spanking.

Suggestions For Parents Of Infants

Infants respond impulsively to many situations without a real understanding of their surroundings and abilities. Spanking will only cause fear and anxiety in children who do not yet understand such concepts as consequences and danger.

1. When there is danger, grasp an infant's hand instead of slapping (Leach, 1996).
2. When the infant is holding something that you do not want him to have, trade a toy instead of forcing the item from him (Leach, 1996). He will only hold on tighter if you try to take something away.
3. Baby-proof your living space so that there is nothing dangerous or breakable

in reach (Ruben, 1996; Samalin & Whitney, 1995).

4. Leave the room if you feel your temper flaring, making sure that the baby is in a safe place like a playpen (Leach, 1996).

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Suggestions For Parents Of Toddlers

Disciplining toddlers requires a tremendous investment of time, energy, and patience, so it is important to find effective and appropriate techniques (Ruben, 1996). For example, it will not be effective to tell toddlers not to play with items that are dangerous, such as the stove, because they do not understand the consequences (Samalin & Whitney, 1995). Spanking, however, will not clarify the consequences either. Instead, children may learn from spanking that "I'm a bad person," rather than "I did a bad thing." You must use discipline methods consistently or your child will learn that you are not serious.

1. Make sure the environment is safe by removing any harmful dangerous objects (Samalin & Whitney, 1995). It is natural for toddlers to want to explore their environment. Always supervise toddlers; it is unrealistic to expect a toddler to play safely without adult supervision for more than a few minutes (Leach, 1996).
2. Avoid direct clashes with toddlers, which will only make both of you angry and frustrated. Instead, try a diversion or distraction (Leach, 1996). Many problem situations can be eased with something funny or unexpected, such as tickling a mildly upset child (Ruben, 1996).
3. Use your size and strength to eliminate situations (Leach, 1996). Simply lift a child out of the bath or carry a child who refuses to walk.
4. If you start to deliver a slap, divert it to your knee or a table (Leach, 1996). This sound will interrupt the behavior without hitting the child.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Suggestions For Parents Of Older Children

1. When you start to feel angry with your children, clap your hands loudly (Leach, 1996). The sound will interrupt their behavior.

2. If your child refuses to listen to you, crouch down to his level, grasp his arms firmly so he cannot avoid looking at you, and then talk calmly (Leach, 1996).
3. Since spanking does not occur in calm, rational moments (Samalin & Whitney, 1995), it is especially important to control your anger to prevent "losing it." You can walk away, hit a pillow, call a friend, or write a note. Once you have cooled down, you will probably feel less inclined to spank.
4. If you feel you must punish your children, make sure the punishment is logically related to the incident so that they can learn the lesson you want to teach (Leach, 1996). For example, if your child rides her bike onto a road that is forbidden, take the bike away for the afternoon. This punishment teaches her that roads can be dangerous, that you are concerned for her safety, and that you will enforce safety rules as long as they are needed. Taking away TV, dessert, or spanking will not teach bike safety.
5. Introduce the appropriate use of time-out (Ruben, 1996). Time-out used as a punishment is controversial. When used to allow a few minutes for a child--and a parent--to regain control of their emotions, it can be effective in stopping a cycle of inappropriate behavior.

Suggestions For All Ages

1. Support good behavior. Hugs and praise will go a long way (Ruben, 1996).
2. Try an ounce of prevention (Ruben, 1996). Effective discipline means announcing clear, simple family rules (the fewer, the better) at a time when children are calm and listening.
3. Try to understand the feelings behind your child's actions (Ruben, 1996). Ask older children why they are angry. When an infant cries, ask yourself: Does she want to be held? Is her diaper wet? Is she hungry?
4. Share your change of heart (Ruben, 1996). If you have spanked your children in the past, but have decided that you will stop, talk to your children about your decision. This lesson can be valuable for your whole family.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Conclusion

The question of whether or not parents should spank their children is not easy to answer. However, spanking is only one of the factors that needs to be considered in the overall discipline process. In deciding how to discipline their children, parents should first ask, "what do I want to accomplish?" If the answer is "teach my

children how to make good choices on their own," spanking may not be an issue.

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[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

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[Back to the Top](#)
