



Instead of Spanking

The Facts

Spanking continues to be an acceptable form of discipline because many parents believe spanking will stop misbehavior quickly, train children not to do things that are forbidden, and teach children to listen.

While spanking may relieve a parent's frustration momentarily, research has shown that parents who spank their children, teach them that aggression and violence are acceptable ways to solve problems. Additionally, researchers have found that children who are spanked tend to experience more depression, low self-esteem, and accept lower paying jobs as adults.

Alternatives to Spanking

Parents often resort to spanking because they do not know other strategies for changing children's undesirable behavior. Here are some effective alternatives:

Redirect Infants

Infants respond impulsively to many situations without a real understanding of their abilities and surroundings. Spanking causes fear and anxiety in young children. Young children are not capable of understanding complex concepts like consequences and danger.

1. Childproof your home. Put all potential hazards, such as cleaning supplies and breakables out of reach.
2. When danger is present, grab the infant's hand instead of slapping.
3. If an infant is holding something you do not want him to have, exchange it for a toy.

Get calm

If you become angry and feel like slapping your child, step away if you can. Calm down and get quiet. Give yourself time to think of alternatives to the problem. Parents most often lose it when they are under stress. If you can't leave the situation, mentally step back and count to ten.

Take time for yourself

Parents are more apt to spank when they feel depleted and hurried. It's important for parents to schedule time for only themselves.



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Parents are more apt to spank when they feel depleted and hurried. It's important for parents to schedule time for only themselves.

Be firm but kind

Sometimes parents become frustrated when their children don't mind after repeated requests. They resort to spanking to get compliance. If you find yourself in this situation, try this: 1) Get down to your child's level. 2) Make eye contact and touch him gently. 3) Explain in a kind but firm manner exactly what you would like him or her to do.

Give choices

Giving choices is an effective alternative to spanking. *Example:* If your child is playing with her food at the table ask, "Would you like to stop playing with your food or would you like to leave the table?" If she continues to play with her food, use kind but firm action to help her down from the table.

Logical consequences

Consequences that are logically related to the behavior help to teach responsibility. *Example:* "You may either turn the TV down or play outside. It's your choice." *Example:* "I can't vacuum your room if toys and clothes are laying on the floor. So I'll place them in bags and put them in the basement until you decide to put them away."

Provide opportunities for make-ups

Instead of punishing children when they break agreements, give them opportunities to strengthen integrity and show good will. *Example:* Your son has a curfew of 9:30 and he doesn't get home until 10:00. Rather than grounding him, discuss the importance of keeping his word. The purpose is to encourage him to make responsible choices, not force him into submission. Suggest he come up with ways to regain your trust by putting the responsibility back on him. *Example:* chopping firewood, yard work, or cleaning out the garage. If the misbehavior is repeated, extend the time that must elapse before they will be allowed to try again.

Through positive modeling and discipline adults teach children how to become well-adjusted members of society. When children are treated with respect and are able to have some control, he learn to respect and listen to their parents.

Produced by

PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP) (800) 457-2736

Colorado Family Education, Resources & Training
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Funded by the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP

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