



POSITIVE PARENTING

S.A.F.E.

& Effective
Discipline

Successful parenting is not about controlling a child's behaviour. It's about teaching children to control their own behaviour.

– **KELLY BARTLETT**
Encouraging Words for Kids





Purpose

The purpose of this booklet is to provide parents of young children with information about positive parenting and discipline practices that are safer and more effective than physical punishment.

Discipline = Teaching

Discipline comes from the word “disciple” meaning “to teach.” Parents want to teach their children responsibility, care and concern for others, and to think for themselves. Many years of research have found that physical punishment is not a safe or effective form of discipline.

Stresses of Parenting

Parenting can be very meaningful and enjoyable, but it can also be very stressful. As a parent, you not only have to take care of your child's needs but your own needs as well. There are many safe and effective disciplinary strategies parents can use, but some parents use physical punishment either when they feel stress or anger, or because they believe it is the most effective and responsible way to manage misbehaviour.

In order to cope with the stresses of parenting, it is important to seek help from family, friends, and community supports, so you too can be physically and mentally healthy. There will be times you feel yourself becoming angry or enraged with your child. It is important to think of strategies to manage these feelings before they lead to behaviour you may regret.

Taking control of your anger or rage will help you problem solve and parent more effectively. When you are experiencing strong negative feelings, practicing the following strategies may help you manage your behaviour:

- 1 Prepare physically and mentally for tasks you know will be difficult.
- 2 Talk with a partner, relative or friend.
- 3 In the heat of the moment, count to ten very slowly while thinking of the benefits of approaching the child when you are feeling calmer.
- 4 Take deep breaths and let stress leave your body as you breathe out.
- 5 Leave the room if it is safe to do so.

Imagine who you want your children to become. Be that.

Reasons some parents give for using physical punishment:

Here are five common reasons some parents give for using physical punishment, followed by responses supporting positive discipline instead of physical punishment.

“If I give up physical punishment, my child will be undisciplined.”

Children definitely need discipline, but positive discipline is much safer and more effective than physical punishment.

“I was spanked as a child and I turned out okay.”

Many people who were spanked as children turned out okay because of positive experiences with their parents and others, not because they were spanked. Many parents used to spank their children, but research over time has found that physical punishment can be emotionally harmful in the long term.

“Physical punishment works.”

It might seem like physical punishment works at first, but it will not meet most parents' long-term parenting goals. Positive discipline takes time, but will be safer and more effective than physical punishment in the long-term.

“I only use physical punishment to save my child from harm.”

Parents can better save their children from harming themselves by picking them up or talking with them. Using physical punishment risks harming children.

“My religion requires me to use physical punishment.”

Some parents believe their religion teaches them to use physical punishment, but other parents from these same religions believe they are to raise their children without using violence.



Physical Punishment & the Law in Canada

32 countries from around the world have banned physical punishment. Sweden was the first with amazing results!

Because of Section 43 of the Canadian Criminal Code, parents are limited in how they can use physical punishment. It is illegal for parents to physically punish using an object, to hit their child's head, or to physically punish their child who is under two or over twelve years of age. Criminal charges can be laid in these cases. It is also illegal for teachers to physically punish their students.

How Physical Punishment can Harm Children

Considerable research has found that physical punishment can be related to:

1 AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

When children are hit, they may be more likely to act aggressively, even into their youth. This aggression can take the form of bullying or other violent acts towards parents, siblings, friends, or dating partners.

2 MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

Being hit is scary. This fear does not go away once the hitting has stopped. Children who have been physically punished can feel stress, fear, shame, unhappiness, anxiety, or depression.

3 PHYSICAL INJURY

Parents are usually much bigger and stronger than their children, and don't realize they can hurt their children by hitting them. Also, parents are more likely to hit when they are angry or stressed, increasing the risk of injury to their children.

4 CONFUSION

Spanking a child's body part, such as his/her buttocks, can be confusing because he/she is told that part of the body is private. It is important for children to know when someone makes them feel bad so they can tell an adult they trust.

5 DAMAGE TO THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Children who are physically punished may see their parents as scary or untrustworthy.

Physical punishment does not work in the long-term

Some parents think physical punishment works because it stops their children from misbehaving in the moment. However, physical punishment does not work in the long-term because:

- 1 Being hit can cause children to yell, cry, or hit others.
- 2 Being hit can cause emotions such as fear, anger, or sadness. These emotions can affect a child's brain and how they learn.
- 3 Physical punishment teaches children to avoid misbehaving only when their parents are around. Physical punishment does not teach respect or care for others.





Instead of talking about ‘good vs. bad parenting,’ I think of it as ‘effective vs. ineffective parenting.’ Remember, if you’re doing something that’s ineffective with your child right now, there is always hope, because you can change.

– JAMES LEHMAN

Positive Parenting & Discipline

Positive parenting and discipline helps children develop in a safe home.

Positive parenting has four parts:

SETTING

long-term parenting goal

FOLLOWING

your child's development

S.A.F.E.

ACTING

warmly and achieving structure

EXPLORING

solutions and reacting

Setting Long-Term Parenting Goals

Think about what you want for your child and what you want your child to learn from you. Young children learn how to act by watching their parents. **You are a role model!**

Acting Warmly

All children need to feel loved, cared for, and recognized by their parents. **You can meet these needs by:**

- 1 Saying “I love you.”
- 2 Smiling, kissing, cuddling, and hugging.
- 3 Complimenting and praising.
- 4 Showing an interest in schoolwork and activities.
- 5 Talking respectfully. Never put down your child.
- 6 Recognizing their feelings.

Achieving structure can prevent misbehaviour.

You can achieve structure by:

- 1 Making sure your child is safe from harm.
- 2 Being consistent.
- 3 Making home a safe and fun place.
- 4 Noticing which tasks are most difficult for your child and planning ahead for those moments of frustration.
- 5 Setting rules that are:
 - a. Age and ability appropriate.
 - b. Explained in simple words and easy for your child to explain back to you.
 - c. Few in number. Make sure rules about safety come first.
 - d. Flexible. Rules might change if your child is having a particularly bad day or when your child grows older.

Following your Child's Development

Following your child's development helps you see the world through your child's eyes. This can make you a stronger teacher for your child.

REMEMBER

- Children become more independent as they grow. You will still have to make big decisions for your child, but you can help him/her make small decisions. When teaching your child how to do something new, do it while your child watches, then together, and finally let your child do it alone while being nearby if help is needed.
- Your child's social life changes greatly when starting kindergarten or school. Teaching your child that he/she is smart and lovable will help your child begin positive relationships with classmates and teachers.

Exploring Solutions and Reacting

Children will make mistakes. There are times when parents will have to explore solutions and react to their child's misbehaviour. When exploring solutions, think about why your child might be acting out, and make sure his/her needs are being met. If your child's needs are being met, but the misbehaviour continues, try responding by removing a privilege or giving a time-out. These strategies are most effective when dealing with misbehaviours such as not sharing, hitting, or yelling, but are good for motivating wanted behaviours such as getting a child to do their chores.



Each day of our lives
we make deposits in
the memory banks of
our children.

– CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

How to Effectively Use Removal of Privileges or Time-Out

- 1 Act right away.
- 2 Firmly explain why the removal or time-out is to happen. Explain how the misbehaviour has hurt others and what you want your child to do next time instead.
- 3 Have the removal or time-out last for one minute per your child's age. Put a timer or clock where your child can see it.
- 4 Stay in the same room as your child, but do something that will give you a break too.
- 5 Once the time is up, ask your child why the removal or time-out happened. Carefully explain why if your child doesn't understand.
- 6 Let your child go back to playing, and give lots of praise for positive actions as soon as they happen.



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