



What's Wrong with Spanking?

Nobody's perfect

The first few years of a child's life are the most important for healthy growth and development. Young children need safety, security and lots of love to feel good about themselves and to care about others. This is easy when children are doing what we want them to do. But what about when they don't do what we want them to do?

Parents often feel unsure about how to handle their child's behaviour. Many parents feel like spanking their children at times.

This pamphlet explains why spanking actually doesn't work. And it gives some tips on how to effectively discipline children without spanking.

Discipline doesn't begin until children are old enough to understand it. Babies don't need discipline.

Never shake or spank a baby.

What is Discipline?

All children need guidance from their parents, including on how we want them to behave. This guidance is what we call "discipline."

Children need time to learn what they should do and should not do. They learn by watching their parents and others, by hearing clear instructions - "Toys go back on the shelf" - and by getting praise and encouragement for their efforts.

Discipline teaches children responsibility, self-control, and right from wrong. It raises the child's self-esteem, encourages the child to do better, and strengthens the parent-child bond.

Why Doesn't Spanking Work?

Spanking is not an effective form of discipline, even though some people may think it is.

Spanking can lead to anger and resentment and can cause children to lose trust in their parents. Spanking teaches that hitting others is okay. In the long run, spanking makes children's behaviour worse, not better.

Never spank! It simply doesn't work - for the child or the parent.

What Does Work?

What works is to build your child's confidence and problem-solving skills. It is important to figure out the reasons for your child's behaviour such as:



- boredom •tiredness •hunger
- frustration •restlessness
- lack of words for feelings
- misunderstanding
- discouragement •fear
- illness •physical pain
- sudden interruption of an activity.

When you understand the reason for your child's behaviour, it may be easier to handle the situation without losing your temper. **Here are some tips for common situations:**

Toddlers Want to Touch Everything

It's how they get to know the world. Slapping a child's hand teaches the child to fear his or her world, not to explore and understand it. The use of time-out is not appropriate for children under two.

Things to try: Put dangerous things out of reach

- shift your child's attention with a safe toy
- use words like "hot," "sharp," "ouch" to teach about danger
- watch your child closely
- always make sure your child is in a safe place where you can see him or her.

Is Your Preschooler Having Tantrums?

Often, young children have tantrums because they are frustrated and cannot control their feelings. They can be frightened by their tantrums. Spanking them may only frighten them more.

Things to try: Stay close by

- keep your child safe
- stay calm and quiet
- take deep breaths.

When he or she is calm, use words like "You were mad." Show your child how to handle angry feelings without yelling or hitting.

Ways to Help Your Child Behave Well

Create a loving and respectful home.

Be a good role model.

Focus on prevention.

Decide what is truly important and have a few clear and consistent rules.

Tell your child what you expect.

Praise your child's efforts, even if they're not perfect.

Respect your child's needs to grow and explore.

Watch your child closely so that you can redirect behaviour before it gets worse.

Ignore minor misbehaviour.

Make sure that you both get enough sleep.

Make sure that you both eat nutritious food regularly.

Last but not least, have lots of fun with your child.



If you are feeling angry:

make sure your child is safe.

take a few minutes for yourself, then calmly talk to your child.

call someone who will understand.

Parents are always learning. All parents need ideas and support. Remember... Nobody's Perfect!

Where to Go for Support:

Parent Help Line 1-888-603-9100 offers parents and caregivers access to information, support and referral 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's anonymous, bilingual and free from anywhere in Canada. Also, contact:

Family doctor or nurse

Local public health department

Child care centres

Family resource centres

Child and family service agencies

Parenting programs such as **Nobody's Perfect**

Native friendship centres, First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations

Multicultural or newcomer centres

For copies of this free brochure contact:

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
Tunney's Pasture (1907D1) Ottawa, ON K1A 1B4
Telephone: 1(800)267-1291 or (613)957-2938
TTY: 1(800)561-5643 or (613) 952-6396
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Web site: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nc-cn

