



Criticism of traditional parenting methods is typically met with suspicion, resistance, and hostility. Were this fundamental conservatism of human nature to express itself in words, it might say something like this:

If the old methods worked well enough for past generations, they'll surely work for the next. Don't fix it if it isn't broken. Don't mess with success. Sometimes children just need a good smack on the bottom to get their attention. It never did a child any harm. That's how I was raised, and I turned out okay.

But just how well did we really turn out? Sooner or later we have to admit that perhaps not all family traditions are created equal. Maybe in some cases, they've made our lives more precarious and unhappy than they need to have been. And maybe — just *maybe* — we haven't turned out quite as “okay” as we would like to believe and have others believe.

When we praise our parents' treatment of us when we were little, are we merely fishing for approval of our own similar behaviors now? Are we trying to reassure ourselves that the way we like to remember things is the way they really were and ought to remain?

Let's test the I-turned-out-okay argument by examining a few real-life examples from my own childhood. See if they apply to you.

1) There were ashtrays in every room of our house. My parents smoked, as did most adult visitors to our home. The aroma of cigarette, cigar and pipe smoke was always present. Nobody minded. In fact, not one day passed in my early life when I was not exposed to tobacco smoke. I was even exposed in the womb because my mother smoked when she was pregnant with me. *And I turned out okay.*

freedom more than the security of governing a populace forcibly of one mind. Over the years these proud hopes have slowly approached reality. Except for children. Which brings us back to our original question: How does it become possible to bypass standard ethics for certain sets of people?"

Adah Maurer, "Psychodynamics of the Punisher," Watman Educational Services, 1974. See www.nospank.net/maurer2.htm.

"Punitive measures whether administered by police, teachers, spouses or parents have well-known standard effects: (1) escape—education has its own name for that: truancy, (2) counterattack—vandalism on schools and attacks on teachers, (3) apathy—a sullen do-nothing withdrawal. The more violent the punishment, the more serious the by-products."

B. F. Skinner, Ph.D., author, Professor of Psychology, Harvard
Excerpt from personal communication, 1983.

"Corporal punishment trains children to accept and tolerate aggression. It always figures prominently in the roots of adolescent and adult aggressiveness, especially in those manifestations that take an antisocial form such as delinquency and criminality."

Philip Greven, Professor of History, Rutgers University. Excerpt from *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse*, 1990. (p.193) See www.nospank.net/greven.htm.

"I have always been an advocate for the total abolition of corporal punishment and I believe the connection with pornography that is so oriented has its roots in our tradition of beating children."

Gordon Moyes, D. D., Pastor, Uniting Church, Superintendent of the Wesley Central Mission, Sydney, Australia. Excerpt from personal communication, 1980.

"The much-touted 'biblical argument' in support corporal punishment is founded upon *proof-texting* a few isolated passages from Proverbs. Using the same method of selective scripture reading, one could also cite the Bible as an authority for the practice of slavery, adultery, polygamy, incest, suppression of women, executing people who eat pork, and infanticide. The brutal and vindictive practice of corporal punishment cannot be reconciled with the major New Testament themes that teach love and forgiveness and a respect for the sacredness and dignity of children—and which

overwhelmingly reject violence and retribution as a means of solving human problems. Would Jesus ever hit a child? NEVER!”

The Rev. Thomas E. Sagendorf, United Methodist Clergy (Retired), Hamilton, Indiana. Personal communication, 2006.

“Researchers have also found that children who are spanked show higher rates of aggression and delinquency in childhood than those who were not spanked. As adults, they are more prone to depression, feelings of alienation, use of violence toward a spouse, and lower economic and professional achievement. None of this is what we want for our children.”

Alvin Poussaint, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, 1999. See www.nospank.net/psnt.htm

“Infliction of pain or discomfort, however minor, is not a desirable method of communicating with children.”

American Medical Association, House of Delegates, 1985.

“As long as the child will be trained not by love, but by fear, so long will humanity live not by justice, but by force. As long as the child will be ruled by the educator’s threat and by the father’s rod, so long will mankind be dominated by the policeman’s club, by fear of jail, and by panic of invasion by armies and navies.”

Boris Sidis, Ph.D., M.D., from “A lecture on the abuse of the fear instinct in early education” in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1919. See www.nospank.net/sidis.htm

“Slavish discipline makes a slavish temper. . . Beating them, and all other sorts of slavish and corporal punishments, are not the discipline fit to be used in the education of those we would have wise, good, and ingenuous men.”

John Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education,” 1692.

“Chide not the pupil hastily, for that will both dull his wit and discourage his diligence, but [ad]monish him gently, which shall make him both willing to amend and glad to go forward in love and hope of learning... Let the master say, ‘Here ye do well.’ For I assure you there is no such whetstone to sharpen a good wit and encourage a love of learning as his praise... In mine opinion, love is fitter than fear, gentleness better than beating, to bring up a child rightly in learning.”

Roger Ascham, Tutor to Queen Elizabeth I, from *The Scholemaster*, published 1570.

“Children ought to be led to honorable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning, and most certainly not by blows and ill treatment.”

Plutarch, circa 45–120 CE, “The Education of Children,” Vol. I, *Moralia*, Ancient Greece.

“It is a disgusting and slavish treatment... When children are beaten, pain or fear frequently have the result of which it is not pleasant to speak and which are likely subsequently to be a source of shame, shame which unnerves and depresses the mind and leads the child to shun the light of day and loathe the light. . . I will spend no longer time on this matter. We know enough about it already.”

Quintilian, circa 90 CE, *Institutes of Oratory*, Ancient Rome

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What do virtually all juvenile delinquents have in common?

A: They have been raised by spankers.

Q: What was a common feature of the childhoods of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein and Charles Manson?

A: Each one was relentlessly, severely, physically punished.

Q: What do most prisoners on death row have in common?

A: Plenty of spankings during childhood.

Q: What do rapists, arsonists, terrorists, torturers, serial killers, mass murderers, suicide bombers, kidnappers, snipers, assassins, muggers, vandals, spouse batterers and stalkers have in common?

A: Violent upbringing.

Q: Which child is destined never to join the company of felons?

A: One who is raised in a nurturing, attentive, supportive, non-spanking family.

Q: To turn a friendly puppy into a vicious guard dog, what must you do to it?

A: Restrict its movement and beat it often.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are people in your community who have never heard the ideas expressed in this publication. It's time they heard, don't you agree?

We invite you to become an active partner in our campaign to spread the word that a safe, sane, nonviolent world begins at home, one child at a time. The evidence is clear: gentle, patient, caring treatment of children during their formative years is the "magic pill" that puts them on the right path for a lifetime. Since children behave as well as they are treated and learn from example, we have a duty to expose them to the best treatment and the best examples. They in turn will perpetuate that standard with their own children, and so on into future generations. It's that simple.

Many people initially respond to the evidence against spanking with skepticism. Some reject it outright. Some refuse to think about it or may even become annoyed or hostile because this information makes them feel exposed and vulnerable. Don't let that discourage you. There are others who want to know why the old familiar method for socializing children works so poorly. And there are those who already are raising their children without violence but need reassurance that they are on the right track.

We are confident that some day soon civilized humanity will look back with astonishment and pity at the time when people believed hitting children was good for them.

As this booklet goes to press, there are 25 nations that have modernized their laws so that protection against assault and battery applies to all persons irrespective of age. They have wisely closed spankers' legal loophole. Listed with their respective dates of reform, they are: Sweden - 1979, Finland - 1983, Norway - 1987, Austria - 1989, Cyprus - 1994, Italy - 1996, Denmark - 1997, Latvia - 1998, Croatia - 1999, Bulgaria - 2000, Germany - 2000, Israel - 2000, Iceland - 2003, Ukraine - 2004, Romania - 2004, Hungary - 2005, Greece - 2006, Netherlands - 2007, New Zealand - 2007, Portugal - 2007, Uruguay - 2007, Venezuela - 2007, Chile - 2007, Spain - 2007, Costa Rica - 2008 . . . *and counting!*

RECOMMENDED FURTHER STUDY

Visit PTAVE's Web site, "Project NoSpank" at www.nospank.net. There, you'll find scholarly works that constitute the bibliography for this booklet and a vast collection of related articles, letters and book excerpts. Especially see Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence* at www.nospank.net/fyog.htm.

THIS BOOKLET is offered free of charge. It also can be read online at www.nospank.net/pt2009.htm and conveniently printed in booklet form from www.nospank.net/pt2009.pdf. Copyright is waived on condition that the text is left unchanged and reprints are offered free.

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Praise for this publication

● “Thank you so much for your clear, true, brave and convincing booklet. It should be offered free to every parent immediately after the birth of EACH of their children.” — Alice Miller, Ph.D., psychotherapist and internationally renowned author of (among other books) the best-selling *For Your Own Good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence*.

● “This is the most articulately written argument against spanking I have ever seen. If every pediatrician in this country gives this booklet to their patients’ parents on the first visit and recommends a short discussion on the second visit, we will have a reduction in child abuse. — Katharine Bensinger, M.S., LCPC, Program Director, Parenting Education Program, Community Counseling Centers of Chicago.

● “‘Plain Talk’ is my #1 tool in helping parents make the decision to stop spanking. I can’t tell you how many have come in after reading it and said, ‘I’ll never spank my child (children) again!’ ” — Janis Christenson, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Nashville, Tennessee.

● “I want to let you know how much I appreciate ‘Plain Talk About Spanking.’ In my job as the Early Childhood Specialist in our child-serving community mental health agency, I find it particularly important to have adults make conscious choices about the best way to provide guidance for children. Your booklet is offered to those attending my speaking engagements, enrolled in our parenting classes, and professionals who have contact with me.” — Lynn McCasland, Early Childhood Specialist, Family Resource Centers, Findlay, Ohio.

● “I have made ‘Plain Talk About Spanking’ required reading for my parenting classes at the University of Hawaii and for parents at our Family Education Training Center. Thank you for helping me teach that discipline and spanking are not the same. As an Adlerian family counselor, your booklet is congruent with my professional and personal beliefs. Both of my now grown children were successfully parented without ever being spanked.” — James A. Deutch, DSW, LCSW, Lecturer, Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Hawaii. Past President, Family Education Centers of Hawaii.