

To Spank or Not to Spank? Is that Really Still a Question?  
Are parents still spanking their children?

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There is a boundless amount of parenting help to be found in many social network communities where some parents ask questions and other inspired parents give their answers. The idea, a good one in my opinion, is parents share with other parents in an effort to help one another. This same activity is what use to be done locally, in neighborhood playgrounds, churches, coffee shops, and other places where parents gathered with their children. Because we are now a worldwide community and neighborhood, with our shared backyard fence being the internet, these kinds of social network sites answer the same desires; people wanting to tell other people how to live their lives by giving and receiving advice. One of my visits to a local parenting networking site landed me in the thick of parents sharing their ideas on how to parent more effectively. Of course, I couldn't hold back from offering my sage opinion and advice as well.

One mother wondered at what age it was okay to spank her child on his bare bottom? I could hardly believe the question. Are parents still spanking their children? Obviously the answer is yes, otherwise why would this mother be asking the question. And she was asking for some specific help. She didn't ask, should I spank or not? She wanted to spank her child on his bare bottom so he would feel the sting, not to be confused by some other sensation that could be diffused by the padding of diapers or other clothing.

What followed was a lively and mostly respectful debate among the parents about the concept of spanking although this was not the originators specific questions about spanking a bare or protected bottom. And, with some relief I'm happy to report that most of the parents answered that they never have and never will spank their children. Phew! Those who defended spanking spent time explaining their position about never spanking in anger and that spanking was not the only method used for discipline. I question a child's ability to distinguish between a slap from an angry parent that is different from a slap from a parent who is not angry and yet, is still striking the child to make the point and teach the lesson. Can children discriminate this subtle difference? The group was about equally split between those who had received spanking in their own childhood and were not damaged and those who were spanked and have yet to forgive their parents. I was spanked as a child and I turned out fine some proclaimed. Others said because they were spanked during their childhood they were determined to never spank their own children. Some people living in countries other than the United States stated that if a parent or carer struck their child in any way, whether it was a simple swat on the behind, a spanking on bare bottom or no, this was against the law. Physical disciplining of children is child abuse - period. I wonder why we in the United States have not taken as strong a position.

Since it seems that there is still a question to spank or not to spank, I offer my opinion and advice. Let me start by quoting from Drive by Daniel Pink: Carrots & sticks are so last century. Drive says for the 21st century work, we need to upgrade to autonomy, mastery & purpose. In this outstanding book Pink goes on to share the scientific research leaving no question that trying to influence our children's behavior by either offering rewards (carrots) or punishment (sticks, or in this case a spanking) does not lead to the desired results of changing behavior. In fact, more often than not it leads to the exact opposite of what parents want! Children will work hard to avoid getting caught for the offense that might lead to a spanking, or they will misbehave even more, or they will change their feelings and behaviors toward the spanker and still not change their behavior. Bruce Lipton (The Biology of Belief) clearly explains that people are either in a protection mode or in a learning mode. If parents are hoping to teach their children a lesson that the child will remember, they should not spank. Spanking puts children into protection, not a place where they are learning anything. Although there are plenty more arguments to be made with more studies to quote and highlight, I'm going to offer different advice. Let's change the questions leading us to different answers.

Almost every parent has had the urge to spank their children or to raise their voice out of frustration and anger at some point in their parenting life. There are times when parents are tired and just want their child to do what you want them to do, even if the child doesn't want to. And with these times comes the temptation to spank them in order to get what you want. Hopefully, saner more mature feelings emerge keeping parents from hitting their children to get what they want. If there is any reasoning or rational mind left, a parent will realize that spanking will still not get them what they want, and now they will have an angry, upset child while they themselves are feeling upset and more frustrated.

Let me ask a different question. During those times when you want to spank your child, what is it you want that you are trying to get by spanking? If I could show you a different, less violent and more loving way to get what you want are you willing to consider doing something different? I wish I could ask the mom who originally submitted the question about spanking her bare bottomed child, what do you want that you are trying to get by spanking your child? For those parents who explain that they are calm and spanking their children not from a place of anger, but in an attempt to teach their child an important lesson I wish I could ask them, if I could show you a different way to help your child learn the lesson you want her to learn without ever having to hit her again, would you like to learn it?

I may be stepping way out on a limb here, but I believe the reason spanking parents spank is because they don't know a different or better way to work with their children. For most of us, the reason we are still parenting the way our parents parented us is because we don't know a better way. Hurray for the internet and the social media sites where parents who do know a better way and have learned alternative approaches to spanking can share with one another. One place that I would recommend parents seek better answers is [www.peacefulparenting.com](http://www.peacefulparenting.com). Of course! Mine

is not the only alternative, however. There are plenty of places, easily found using a search engine of your choice.

Practicing a Peaceful Parenting approach means that parents understand that behavior is never the problem from the child's point of view. The child is behaving the way he is because there is something that he wants and needs and doesn't know any other way to get it other than the way he is presently behaving. When the child learns and knows a better, more responsible way to get what she needs and wants she will behave better, thus ending the problem of misbehavior.

When a parent observes his child misbehaving, the parent's problem is the misbehaving child. I help parents understand that when they teach their child to get what she wants responsibly this means an end to their child's misbehavior, thus ending the parent's problem, a misbehaving child. Parents can get what they want simply by teaching their children how to get what the children want responsibly. Ah ha! Parents, embrace the idea to teach your child a better, more responsible behavior to help your child get what he wants. Once that is accomplished the child has what she wants and the parent has what he wants.

Thinking about or considering spanking never even comes into anyone's thoughts!

Who needs to spank whom? Does being bare bottomed or not make any sense?

Parents, the next time you hear or see a parent using some kind of threat, stick or spank to get their children to behave better, do them a favor and refer them to some of the places they can find on line to change how they understand and deal with misbehaving children. Share these ideas with all of the people over your World Wide neighborhood fence and Web.