



To Spank?! Or Not to Spank!

I don't want to spank my kids, but

“My kids will behave better after spanking ... I spank them for their own good.”

Spanking or scolding may help to keep children's behavior under control in brief duration. Yet, the practice shocks the children, inflicts physical pain, and makes them feel intimidated, forcing them to abort their misbehavior. Parents will then get a wrong impression that spanking or scolding are useful ways to discipline their children. However, this idea is in fact faulty. Spanking and scolding have harmful effects on children's physical and emotional development in the long run.

Children who are often mistreated by constant spanking or scolding, or even abused, have lower self-esteem. They find themselves inferior to others. There are also higher chances for these children to develop emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety or other social difficulties (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019), or physical illness (Afifi et al., 2016). In some cases, children's brain development, attention or other learning functions would be affected as well (Bick & Nelson, 2016). For the sake of children's physical and psychological wellbeing in the long run, please STOP spanking or scolding in child handling.

“My parents also spanked me when I was a kid, and it was no harm done.”

Research suggests that parents, whom were mistreated by their own parents when they were young, tend to handle their children in similar ways (Ni. et al, 2018). Parents are role models for their children, especially the little ones. Children often imitate the language and manner of their angry parents. Having witnessed how parents handled





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problems with scolding and spanking, children may learn to solve problems in similar ways when having conflicts with siblings or classmates, or possibly hit their peers when they get angry. These lead to other behavioral problems. Also, these children are more likely to solve their problems with aggressive means in future years.

“My kids are out of control. There are no ways to handle them other than spanking.”

There are many gentler and positive ways, which are scientifically proven to be effective, in handling children's misbehavior. These means help improve children's behavior while fostering parent-child relationship. Spanking and scolding may pose an immediate threat to physical safety of the children. Parents, with no intention to do harm, may think they can stop themselves from hurting their children in time. But accidents can happen easily when people get furious. To avoid hurting the children, parents should consider learning some effective handling skills which help foster children's development and improve their behavior with lasting effects. Please discuss with the examiner who assessed your child or social worker of the center for more information.

“I am really mad and can't help spanking my kids!”

It is indeed stressful for parents to take care of their children and family at the same time, while some parents are holding full-time job as well. The welfare of the whole family will be affected when parent's stress cannot be relieved. In case parents are easily irritable, with frequent temper outbursts, or cannot help but have to spank when managing their children, these are all red flags suggesting parents have difficulties handling their emotions. Parents are strongly advised to seek professional help to alleviate their stress and improve the situation.





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First step to positive parenting: What can parents do?

- ♥ Parents are children's role model. The impact of parenting on children's development is far-fetched. Therefore, it is important to choose alternative methods of discipline that do not involve physical punishment.
- ♥ Positive thinking helps bring positive changes in children's behavior. When children are not compliant or throw tantrums, parents can treat it as a reminder for the need to take action or as a chance to improve children's emotional regulation and problem solving skills. All these skills are beneficial to the child's development.
- ♥ Be prepared and alert to the "high-risk situation": Look back and think of any specific place and time, in which child's behavior is particularly challenging and provoking. Make a list of things in advance that are helpful to calm yourself down when you get angry in these situations. For instance, you can go drink some cold water, take deep breaths, or look at objects, photos or reminders at home, which help curtail your strong emotions.
- ♥ Pay attention to the physiological responses when you are angry, such as pounding heart, shortness of breath or tightened muscles. These are some physical signs which come along with your heightened emotions. Whenever you notice those signs, use the pre-listed ways to calm yourself down before taking action to solve problems.
- ♥ Seeking help: Difficulties are expected in parenting. It is helpful to share with other parents with similar parenting beliefs or with experienced parents. Parents can actively seek for peer support to help relieve parenting stress.
- ♥ Learning new skills: Parents can join parenting course organized in the community, and/or read related books or materials on parenting skills.
- ♥ Do not hesitate to seek for professional help in case the situation persisted.





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Sharing from parents and caretakers.....

“I can feel my heart pounding heavily when I am mad. I will try to relax, tell myself to go easy, and think of something positive to distract myself. Usually I feel better after awhile.”

“Be prepared in advance. Make a list of things that can help to calm myself... I'll go to the bathroom and splash water on my face, or look into the mirror and tell myself not to be that furious.”

“Before yelling at my kids, I try to count backward from 20. In case I still cannot chill down, I'll count again.”

“When I am so angry and want to spank my kids, I'll try to go out have a walk with them if the situation allows. This helps distract myself so that I can regain control.”

“I'd put up my kid's or family photos at home to remind myself how cute and lovely they are, and look at them when I am angry... Spanking and scolding only make the situation worse.”

“My kid took ages to finish meals. I blew up and he'd cry even louder when I yelled. He ate even less food and took longer to finish as he cried. I'd better try other ways and stop yelling.”

“Spanking or scolding will not teach my kids to behave well. Recently, they started to talk back in angry voice with some of the words I used to scold them.”

“Spanking only vented out my anger and did not do any good. I felt so regret afterwards and considered myself as a bad parent.”





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Daddy and mommy, can you find ways to help yourself?

Every child is a precious gift to parents. Do you still remember the intimate moments when you first held your baby after he or she was born? We are thankful for the children's presence in our lives and committed to protect and foster them. As the child grows, parents may face increasingly more difficulties and stress. Parents have to take care of the daily routines of children's eating and drinking, learning, and behavior and emotional needs as well. In times of frustration, parents may want to settle the child quickly and inappropriate means of handling may be used unwittingly. Parents may forget good parent-child relationship is the key to success in parenting. It is never too late to take action changing and improve your child handling skills. We sincerely encourage you to make up your mind. Learning some positive parenting skills can help and will be beneficial for both the parents and child in the long run. Fostering good relationship with our child is of utmost importance.

Parents resources or counseling service

Integrated Family Service Centers (IFSCs) of Social Welfare Department, HKSAR Government. (Hotline: 23432255)

Association Against Child Abuse. (Parent-child Support Line: 27551122)

End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation. (Counseling Hotline: 28899933)

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