Child Discipline: Spanking Essay, Research Paper

Child Discipline: Spanking

Parents use discipline to teach their children the difference between right and wrong. The type of discipline parents use is entirely up to them but, “ninety percent of parents say that they have used [spanking] as a mean of discipline on their child, and most parents say that it was used on them when they were youngsters” (James). Spanking is a form of discipline that has been used by many parents; but it is now becoming the method that is being frowned upon by most doctors and many parents. “The American Academy of Pediatricians say that spanking might actually do more harm than good”(Eisenhauer), meaning that the spanking will not correct the problems that the child has, but only make them worse. In some countries around the globe, such as Norway and Sweden, elected officials have made it totally illegal for parents to spank their child. Since this happened Oakland, California has established an official “No Spanking Zone.” This proposes a question, is spanking a good form of discipline? From what the doctors say it certainly appears not to be and I think most parents tend to agree with them that spanking is not an acceptable form of discipline anymore. But according to the Critique of Anti-Spanking Study, found in Assertive Discipline, “experts do not all agree that spanking is harmful and some believe that mild spanking is a useful form of discipline” (Canter). Also the same study said “72% of people surveyed still find it acceptable to punish a child by spanking them” (Canter). These are very different conclusions than the one found by the other doctors and people asked above. Bringing the reader to the conclusion that all discipline is a form of opinion.

Most opinions still lean toward spanking being a form of abuse and that spanking a child is totally unacceptable because striking a young child will not actually teach them to be good. Spanking also hurts children mentally and spanking a child is no different from hitting some one else. The majority of parents that hit their kids are at the point of frustration and anger where they feel that spanking is the last thing left for them to do.

First, striking a child will not teach them to be good; it actually makes them change the way that they look at things. In fact Parents News says “spanking [children] may have some potentially long term effects such as increasing the misbehavior, aggression, violent or criminal behavior, impaired learning, depression, and in worst case suicide” (Kuttner 46). The items that are cited here are very alarming and they express the concern that spanking is more than just a punishment. As said before spanking “is the least effective way to discipline” a child for two reasons; both reasons teach the child nothing about the difference between right and wrong. The first fact is that spanking confuses the child. “How can they tell what [the spanking] means” (James)? The reason that spanking confuses them is simply this; “parents are the example of the difference between right and wrong” (Edwards). Basically all spanking is doing is telling the child is that every time somebody does something wrong they should be smacked for the mistake they made. Secondly, spanking simply installs a sense of “fear and resentment” towards the parent. The only result that comes from making a child fear the parent is just reverse what is trying to be accomplished; discipline. On top of fearing the parent, the child will also lose respect for their parent and make the relationship between parent and child become very weak. “Discipline will not work if parents do not have a good relationship with their child” says Dr. Mark Wolraich (Canter). This quote just highlights how spanking a child will weaken the respect that is needed between child and parent. In turn, the child does not know that he/she did anything wrong because the child has no respect for the parent any more. These examples show how spanking does not teach the child to be good, but it changes the way that children approach things.

Secondly, hitting a child also hurts them mentally. Children that are spanked not only lose respect for their parents but they also lose respect in themselves. They start to believe that they are bad kids and they may also think that their parents do not like them. But not only are these children troubled at home by being spanked, they are also troubled at school: “There is some evidence from a British study that [children] may be less able to learn because physical punishment reduces a child’s I.Q.” (Burnett). This is one good example of how spanking is the wrong type of discipline because it show how the learning process is effected. The only thing that spanking helps children learn is that it is acceptable for them to use violence as a cure for any problem. Parents do not even know that they are mentally injuring their child as shown here: “although most parents who spank have good intentions, they may actually cause harm by training their children to deal with conflict by using violence” (Kuttner 48). Mental health is really affected by spanking because the child is confused between the difference of what is right and what is wrong. Spanking kids can also lead to mental problems down the road too. “The life stories of notorious individuals- Adolf Hitler amongst them- record excessive physical punishment during childhood” (Edwards). This represents that spanking may have good short-term effects, but down the road physical punishment will cause your child to have severe mental problems.

The worst part about spanking children is that it actually does not teach them to be better people, in fact it will only make them more aggressive towards others. It is just as bad to spank a child because it causes them to want to use force to solve their own problems. Hitting a child is no different than hitting someone else. Parenting Magazine says “hitting a child doesn’t make teach them anything but to have a ‘might makes a right’ attitude towards others” (Kuttner 52). This means that using spanking as a disciplinary method only teaches them that hitting someone when they do something wrong is the right thing to do. Another magazine that deals with parenting issues basically says the same thing about physical punishment. “We do not say to our children (most of us, anyway), ‘Hitting is right’ or ‘Hitting is a good thing to do.’ We do not really believe that it is a good thing to hit people. Most of us are not ‘in favor’ of hitting children. However, many of us (most of us, actually) behave as if it is a good thing to do” says Murray Straus, a journalist for Parents. I think that the main problem is that parents are not informed well enough on the issue that spanking is so bad. The last quote shows that parents are totally unaware that they are even hurting their child because the parents “behave as if it is a good thing to do.” Another thing that was brought to my attention was this: “studies of whole prisons populations all over the Western world show that criminals who used violence on their victims almost invariably had violence used against them when they were children” (Straus 131). I think that this also ties back to hitting being a way to solve problems, but in these circumstances the inmates used much more than just hitting. This also shows that when you hit a child it will effect them sometime in their life. Aggression is another thing that has been found to be effected by physical punishment. “Children have been found to be more aggressive when spanked for punishment than other children that have been disciplined by other means,” says Nancy Breen (Breen). Spanking is a type of discipline that brings out aggression in children and teaches child that it is acceptable for them to hit others. In turn, hitting a child is no different than hitting someone else.

The main reason that parents still insist on using spanking as a form of discipline is because they see quick results. “We felt the time outs and things weren’t working for him and so we found that just a little smack on the behind would get his attention enough to where you could discipline him”, said Andrea Fouriezos in an interview with Parenting Magazine. But this simply means that the parents are using spanking as a last resort type of punishment. This is really bad because they are using it out of frustration and when nothing else is working. I think Dr. Mark Wolraich said it best we he said, “we’re encouraging [parents] to look for other alternatives which have been shown to be effective” (Straus 128). If a doctor encourages other forms of discipline than one has to know that spanking is the wrong approach to disciplining your child.

In conclusion to spanking your child, I feel it is a very bad approach when attempting to discipline your child. Not only does spanking effect them mentally it also does not teach them to be good. Plus, spanking teaches children that violence is the cure to every problem. So next time when your child does something wrong please consider an alternative method of discipline other than spanking them because it will only lead to more problems when the child gets older.

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