

SOME REASONS WHY WE MUST LEARN ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The attractive alternative to discipline by punishment is the employment of strategies that lead children to focus on the actual standards that their educators and parents are trying to communicate rather than on the disciplinary means by which the educators and parents enforce these standards.

Punishment as a tool of discipline is a very ineffective method of discipline; for punishment, strangely enough, often has the effect of teaching the child to behave in exactly the opposite way from the way we want him to behave! Many parents and educators use punishment simply because no one has ever taught them better ways of disciplining a child or their children other than what they have seen their parents and educators practice over the years - spanking.

The act of disciplining a child can be a frustration one. However, at the outset it needs to be stressed that discipline means education. Discipline is essentially programmed guidance that helps people to develop internal self-control, self-direction and efficiency. If it is to work, discipline requires mutual respect and trust. On the other hand, punishment requires external control over a person by force and coercion. Punishment agents seldom respect or trust the one punished.

Corporal punishment is the intentional infliction of the maximum pain as a tool of punishment to correct an attitude or behaviour seen as unacceptable. For it to be effective, the victim must feel the maximum pain.

Corporal punishment – spanking or caning is a form of hitting and thus of physical violence. This fact of physical violence should make the spanking of children unacceptable by the same standards that protect adults, who are not as vulnerable. However, there is more to spanking than simply hitting: spanking also trespasses on one of the body's most private and sexual areas— the buttocks, as it is still done in most of our schools. To fully address the wrongness of spanking children (even adult girls), therefore, we must consider not only the issue of physical violence, but also the issue of sexual trespass. This booklet aims to raise public awareness about the dangers of disciplining children, whether it is done by parents, educators or other caretakers.

Examples are: caning the hands or the buttocks, slapping, pinching, pulling a child's hair or ear and squeezing a child's cheeks.

So much time is wasted in handling teacher-students, student–student conflict which otherwise could have been used in productive work to the benefit of both teachers and the students.

Student behaviour most often reflects the demands of their environment. Most of the poor behaviour, students exhibit at school is due to their lack of knowledge about what is good behaviour. We have always had catalogs of what should not be done but not what should be done. No one really teaches students what should be done right, leaving them confused.

School dropout and juvenile delinquency would cease to be one of the major problems wrecking our nation if only it were possible to persuade parents, educators and other caretakers to stop socialising children in ways guaranteed to make them antisocial and or self-destructive. In other words, stop the caning and start the nurturing.

It should be understood that knowledge gained by compulsion and under the influence of fear, is of little value and is not apt long to be remembered. Fear and education do not go hand in hand, that is why we need to boot fear out off our educational system completely if we really want to make headway.

My personal experience in the classroom has taught me that, lack of parental affection and parental use of spanking for discipline is the major cause of child delinquency in our schools. Spanking parents become role models for their children and they carry this to the school.

We need to learn to teach our children how to demonstrate and verbalise their feelings. As parents and educators, we have a great responsibility toward our children's well being. We need to watch their emotions. Children who prefer feelings can be especially sensitive to their emotional climate in their homes and even in school. Constant conflict at home or in the child's environment can lead to emotional or even physical problems.

How a child is loved, nurtured and shaped by his parents and society constitutes the greatest influence on the growing child. This is why it is said, the family constitutes the bedrock of our society, and peace in the family means peace for the world. Let us create a safe home for our children. A safe home would surely create a safe child and our world would become a safe place for all of us to live in.

Our children are not the problem but the adult in the life of these children. Let us learn how to train and educate our children without resulting to violence. This we can do by reading books on parenting, attending seminars and workshops on parenting.

However, let us have it in mind that a book on parenting or a parenting philosophy is only relevant to the extent that it promotes parenting practices, which support secure bonding. To know if your parenting style is correct, ask yourself this question: In any interaction with a child, will my words or actions strengthen or weaken our relationship.

Connection Parenting recognizes that securing and maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship is our primary goal as parents and the key to our children's optimal human development. Our effectiveness as parents is in direct proportion to the strength of the relationship we have with our children. Connection Parenting promotes parenting practices that support a strong, healthy parent-child relationship. It focuses on parent-child relationship rather than child-parent relationship; which is an ideal parenting style.

It is democratic and not autocratic. Both authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting are reactive. Connection parenting which is democratic is proactive. Rather than focusing on ways to discipline children when their feelings of detachment result in uncooperative or unacceptable behaviour, Connection Parenting focuses on ways to maintain and increase the parent-child bond/ relationship.

All children are gifted children. Each child comes into the world with unique potentials that, if properly nourished, can contribute to the betterment of our world. The biggest challenge for parents and educators is to remove the roadblocks that keep those gifts from being recognized, celebrated, and nurtured.

Let us all champion a culture of compassionate individuals, families, and communities who have fun with, learn from, and responsively and lovingly interact with young children.