

Teaching Guide

**Shaking Hitting Spanking
What To Do Instead**

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Overview

Shaking, Hitting, Spanking: What To Do Instead teaches alternatives to spanking. Four parent-child interactions that often lead to shaking, hitting, and spanking are presented:

- A stressed-out single parent with a crying baby at night
- A toddler spanked for exploring his environment
- An 8-year-old boy who refuses to come in for dinner
- Dad with a daughter who refuses to clean her room.

After each of the four scenes, the viewer is asked to turn off the video and consider what occurred and to brainstorm other solutions. As the video continues, alternate strategies and techniques are presented.

Summary

Shaking, Hitting, Spanking: What To Do Instead is an intriguing title for a parenting video. The underlying assumption to the title is that there are alternatives to hitting. This assumption, however, is not always fully appreciated, is often challenged, is doubted, ridiculed, and rejected by many parents and professionals. The only people who know spanking doesn't work and who truly believe in alternatives are the children: the unfortunate recipients of momentary parental anger, frustration, and an overall temporary sense of incompetence.

Studies have repeatedly shown that continued violence toward children has no long term positive influence on children. Studies generally report the opposite. Children who are victims of repeated corporal punishment often have lower self-esteem and self-concept, are less secure, less happy, and feel less positive about others and the world in general. The concept of the "cold cruel world" is generally used to describe their view of the world. The world does not have to be cold and cruel; it can be warm and kind.

Beliefs are formed over time. Since each experience leaves us with lasting memories and feelings, it's easy to see how the perpetuation of corporal punishment is passed from one generation to the next. Children are hit and are left with feelings and thoughts about the experience. The more frequent the experience, the more clear and consistent become the feelings and memories. Since we are, for the most part, a product of the way we are treated, we come to believe that hitting children is as common as changing a wet diaper.

Shaking, Hitting, Spanking is about people who don't want to hurt their children, but find themselves in situations where their desire not to hurt is overpowered by their desire to be in control. For every child that is hit, hurt, and encouraged to feel lousy about him or herself we all pay the price. Somehow or some way, sooner or later, the developing low self-esteem and low self-concept, along with inward feelings of anger, insecurity, and distrust, will be directed outward toward society. Personal violence will not be denied until we, all of us, sincerely believe and want to work toward eliminating violence toward children and one another.

Myths & Facts About the Value of Spanking

Myth

Children who are not spanked become spoiled.

Fact

Spoiled children are those who constantly want their own way. They choose not to listen to parents and are unaware of the needs of others. Children learn such behavior. It results from inconsistent parenting, failure to provide necessary structure, and neglect of children's needs.

Myth

It is O.K. to spank children as long as you are not angry.

Fact

This statement is made to prevent parents from becoming too severe with their spanking. Some parents cannot control their anger and feel that once they begin hitting their children they will not be able to stop. The thought here is that if children deserve to be punished, parents should wait until they have calmed down before spanking. But if parents are not angry, have calmed down and are in control, why spank at all? Other more effective forms of punishment will help children manage and take responsibility for their behavior.

Myth

An occasional spanking is good for children.

Fact

The word “good” indicates something pleasant is happening. An occasional spanking cannot help children learn desirable behavior. Being hit never feels good. Hitting has no long term value in teaching desirable behaviors.

Myth

Spanking children is the only way to let children know you are angry

Fact

Parents often relieve their stress and frustration by hitting their children when they are angry with them. Although letting off steam is good for the parent, the spanking has no value for the children. In fact, children learn that violence is one way of expressing anger.

Myth

Infants need to be spanked because they cannot understand language.

Fact

Nobody ever deserved to be hit. The skills learned from this program will help replace spanking with more beneficial and pleasant ways of managing children's behavior.

Scenario 1: When Parents Are Tired

In the middle of the night, Lisa, 22, is awakened by her crying infant. She gives Amy the pacifier, checks to see if she's wet, and gives her the bottle, but nothing stops the crying. Exhausted and at the end of her rope, Lisa loses control, shrieks at Amy, and shakes her.

What To Do Instead

When you're tired and your baby's crying, the most important thing is to keep a positive attitude. Remember -when babies cry, they're not trying to be mean to you. They're trying to tell you they need something. Just because it's night time doesn't mean the baby turns off. Before you go into your baby's room, make up your mind you're there to help your baby, not necessarily to stop her from crying. Once you've got the right attitude, it's easier to stop yourself from hurting your baby. Try some of these ideas:

1. Feel her cheek or back to see if she's feverish

Your baby may be sick. Feel her forehead or cheek to see if she's feverish. Check her gums to see if they're red or sore - she may have a tooth coming in. Check to see if her ears are red or hot - she may have an earache. In any of these cases, or if she just won't stop crying, call the doctor the next day.

2. Your baby may have gas or colic

Pediatricians believe colic is caused by a digestive problem such as spasms of one of the internal organs, usually the intestines. In any case, gentle movements to relieve pressure on the abdomen are most effective.

3. Hold your baby, rock her, and relax.

Stress is a feeling generated from situations and communicated to others through touch, language and looks. When parents feel stress, babies pick up the stress through their interactions. Hold your baby and rock her. Talk to her softly; kiss her, hug her and caress her while you rock her gently. While you're holding her, take two or three breaths and relax. Just because your baby's upset doesn't mean you have to be upset.

4. Leave your baby for 10-15 minutes

Sometimes babies get upset and a parent simply can't figure out why. If you feel you might hurt your baby, go into another room and leave her for 10 to 15 minutes. Children need comforting, but if a parent is incapable of providing the nurturing needed at that moment, spending time in another room away from the baby helps you calm down so you can approach the baby in a more positive frame of mind. A baby's constant crying can be nerve-racking for anyone.

5. Walk back and forth while gently bouncing baby

Stand up and bounce your baby gently as you walk back and forth. The rhythm of your walking can put baby back to sleep. Tell her all the wonderful things she did that day and how proud you are to be her parent. Moving about also helps parents release their stress. Focusing on the good things the baby accomplished that day also serves to refocus unpleasant thoughts to more pleasing ones.

6. Sing to your baby. Sing to your baby. She may be scared and your singing can be very calming. It helps if

you have a little radio in a baby's room. Turn the radio on to something that will be soothing to both of you. Singing to the baby and or/turning on a radio provides a stimulus for redirecting negative energy into positive energy.

7. Put baby in the stroller or car

Put your baby in the stroller. The motion can put her back to sleep. If this doesn't work, you can put her in the car and drive around the block a few times.

8. Check the formula

Check the formula you're giving her. Your doctor can tell if she is allergic to it or if she is ready to add solid food. It is not uncommon for babies to have allergic reactions to or difficulty in digesting cow's milk and prepared formulas.

9. Be willing to ask for help

If you've gone several nights without sleep, let a friend or relative take your baby for a little while so you can rest. If you work full time, arrange this for your day off. Many parents feel that it is not okay to ask for help, fearing that seeing assistance is a sign of weakness. Also, seeking help has sometimes been equated with child abuse prevention. Seeking help is a sign of health. Single parents are in particular danger of becoming stressed out with their children.

Finding time without children is critical for to maintain positive mental health.

10. Take time to rest

Remember, it's okay to take time to rest--things will look a lot brighter afterward. A healthy, rested adult will do a better job as a parent than an adult whose physical needs are unmet. Some mothers rearrange their schedule and sleep when their babies sleep. One thing is sure: your baby is not crying to be mean, she is just being a baby.

Scenario 2: When Children Explore

Daniel, 2, is playing on the kitchen floor while his father reads the paper nearby. When Dad leaves the room, Daniel pulls out the cleansers from under the sink. Dad returns, gets angry, and hits Daniel.

What To Do Instead

1. Baby-Proof the House

The most effective alternative to yelling at and hitting children is prevention -- creating an environment where children can enjoy playing safely without having to worry about getting into things that they shouldn't.

2. Adopt a non-hitting attitude

Developing a non-hitting attitude takes time, energy, skills, an awareness that hitting does not promote healthy behaviors, and finally the emotional capacity to replace feelings of violence with feelings of caring.

3. Verbal and Physical Redirection

Verbal redirection is a means of managing your child's behavior by verbally expressing a command.

Appropriate Examples

"Chairs are for sitting. No standing, please."

"No standing in the tubby. Sit, please."

"Oh what a nice toy. Put it back on the shelf, please."

Inappropriate Examples

"No standing on the chair. You'll fall and break your neck."

"Quit standing in the tub. What do you want, an accident?"

"Yes, I see your toy. Now just don't leave it on the floor."

From the examples, the appropriate use of verbal redirection helps the child know what the parent expects and doesn't expect. The inappropriate use of verbal redirection actually doesn't redirect a child's behavior at all. Threats, statements of doom, and telling a child what not to do are not the correct ways to use verbal redirection.

Physical redirection is similar to verbal redirection with one more step. As you are verbally redirecting a child, you are physically redirecting him as well. In the correct use of physical redirection, parents are using nurturing touch to redirect the child to perform more appropriate behavior. A hand gently placed on the child's back or an object taken from a child's grasp are ways parents use physical redirection.

Appropriate Examples

Physically redirect a child away from an electric socket to a safe toy.

Escort a child from the bathroom to the living room and engage the child in play.

Take a dangerous object away and substitute a safer one.

Inappropriate Examples

Physically jerking a child away from the electric socket.

Spanking a child for entering the bathroom unassisted.

Slapping a child's hand for touching a dangerous object.

Activities

Role play these steps to redirect a child.

1. In a firm voice, let the child know he is performing or about to perform an unacceptable behavior. The firm voice indicates this is not a game; the "no" indicates he is to stop the behavior immediately.
2. Approach the child, stoop down, make eye contact, and hold hands.
3. Tell the child his behavior is unacceptable. Use words like "icky," "ouch," or "hot" if he is near something that could injure him like an electric socket or hot oven. Use other words if the child has something in his hand or is touching something you prefer him not touching. Words like "no," "this is Mommy's, not Billy's," or "Sorry, this is not for little boys," convey the message.
4. Attempt to let the child re-establish the original setting. If he has taken something, physically and verbally redirect him to return the object to where it belongs. If he has turned on an appliance, have him turn the appliance off.
5. Use physical and verbal direction. Engage the child in play. Some things young children like are: keys and locks; putting anything smaller into something bigger; puzzles; coloring or scribbling on paper.
6. Praise the child for cooperating. Tell him he is a good listener. Praise for doing will reinforce future encounters.
7. If the child chooses to perform the inappropriate behavior again, repeat the above steps .

Scenario 3: When Children Oppose

Michael, 7, is riding his bike with his friends. When his mother asks him to come in for dinner, he refuses. She asks again, pleads, demands, and finally blows up, as they reach a standoff.

What To Do Instead

1. Say what you really want: Don't give choices when there aren't any

Parents often give kids choices when they really don't mean to. If you give your child a choice, a "no" response is just as likely as a "yes" response. If a parent is unwilling to accept a "no," then choices should not be given. Instead of giving choices, a clear message should be sent.

2. Give children transition time

No one likes to be hurried and told to do something immediately, especially if he or she is having fun or is engaged in an important activity. Transition time is essential for children to disengage from one activity and re-engage in a new activity. The younger the child, the more critical the transition time.

3. Build Your Child's Self-Esteem

A happy child is an easier child to be with. A child who perceives him/herself as competent and capable is a much easier child to direct, encourage, and manage.

4. Sense of Humor

Humor is very effective in preventing the use of corporal punishment.

Activities

1. Role play effective and ineffective delivery of choices and messages for these situations:

- Cleaning a room
- Going with a parent to the store
- Helping clean the house
- Getting dressed

2. Brainstorm ways to enhance the overall self-esteem of a child.

3. Tell children "power stories" at night. Power stories re-cap only the day's events that are positive, productive cooperative and well-meaning. There is absolutely no re-capping of negative or undesirable events.

4. Praise children for cooperating. If children know that their behavior is pleasing to their parents, they are likely to repeat the behavior because children enjoy positive attention.

5. Praise children for who they are-- not necessarily for having done anything at all. Statements such as, "I love you," "you're a neat kid," "I enjoy being with you," convey a positive unconditional regard.

6. Pick out situations that lead to power struggles with children. Choose a partner and role play using humor.

Scenario Four: When Parents are Busy

It's Saturday and Dad is busy building shelves. Heather, 8, would rather watch him work than do her own job -- clean her room. When she refuses to clean her room after several requests from Dad, he gets angry and moves toward her, telling her menacingly to clean it "or else."

What To Do Instead

1. Establish Clear Family Rules

Family rules are very important for helping children learn right from wrong. Children will begin to understand the idea of rules around two years of age. The purpose of family rules is for parents and children to establish consistent guidelines that will help everyone know what is expected. Family rules also encourage family members to take responsibility for their own behavior. When children can talk and know the difference between right and wrong, family rules will help them, as well as their parents, get along better as a family.

Family rules are for everyone in the family. Often parents believe that children need rules but parents don't. Children quickly see the injustice when parents are able to do something, but children get punished for the same action. Comments like "That's not fair," or "How come you can do it and I can't?" are legitimate.

Family Rules for Young Children

Children can begin to follow family rules when they understand the difference between good and bad, and use words to express how they think and feel. Generally, children older than three years can follow rules.

How to Establish Family Rules

There are seven easy steps to follow when establishing rules for your family.

- Get everyone to participate.
- Share problem behaviors.
- Brainstorm a list of rules.
- Keep the rules simple.
- Identify a punishment and reward for each rule.
- Limit the family rules to a maximum of five.
- Drop and add new rules to the list when needed.
- When new problem behaviors appear, have a family meeting and repeat the above steps.

2. Communicate With Your Child

Being able to communicate with children means listening to their opinions, thoughts, ideas, and feelings without being critical and condemning. Children learn early that parents are either people who they can talk to, or people they avoid, lie to, or deny issues and feelings in their lives because their parents don't really listen.

3. Model the Desired Behavior

Parents serve as the primary role models for their children. When parents' actions are compatible with their words, children learn through hearing and seeing the appropriate behavior. When parents help children with tasks, children learn cooperation-- an important skill for increasing nurturing attitudes.

Activity

Identify a child's problem behavior you would like to resolve. Use these steps to resolve the problem.

- Identify the problem. Be specific.
- What has been tried already?
- Identify the behavior you want to see instead.
- Brainstorm ways to achieve the desired behavior.
- Try new ideas. If they do not resolve the problem, go back to the first step. You probably have not accurately identified the real problem.

Use negotiation and compromise to resolve an impasse.

- Determine if there is a difference of opinion between you and your children.
- State your views and the views of other person.
- Check if your impression of the problem and your understanding of their views are accurate.
- Offer a compromise. The other person will either accept or reject your offer.
- Keep negotiating until both parties have reached a mutual acceptance.