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Spanking Children

By Rexanne Mancini

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Results of the Spanking Poll on Rexanne.com:

Voters – 233

Percentage of readers who do not spank their children: 37%

Percentage of readers who spank their children: 62%

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I am completely opposed to spanking. I know that almost twice as many of you spank your children as don't. At the risk of alienating 62 percent of my subscribers, I cannot, in good conscience, keep my opinions to myself. ;–)

I feel we have evolved enough as a society to understand that violence breeds violence. Hitting is physically violent. So is spanking. I do not believe spanking children teaches them to mind their parents or caretakers any better than other forms of constructive discipline. If it is unacceptable to hit an adult, what makes it acceptable to hit a child? Taking into consideration the parent or caretaker is most likely three times the size of the child, doesn't this bring up issues of bullying?

Many of the comments left on the spanking poll mentioned a biblical reference, "Spare the rod, spoil the child." When we consider that the bible was written thousands of years ago, we must also take into consideration that we may have advanced to the point where biblical interpretations are probably not to be taken as literally as they once were. I do not believe parents should spank their children into submission, any more than I believe criminals should be stoned to death by the masses, as was the custom so many years ago.

Many parents (myself included) have neglected to replace spanking with another solid form of discipline. Refraining from spanking our kids does not negate disciplining them. We have created a generation of children without boundaries in our zeal to adopt a kinder, gentler parenting style. While I am thoroughly delighted that many parents have decided not to spank their children, I am saddened by the lack of respect for authority in so many children today. Without limits, children are insecure, always

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testing the boundaries ... begging to be corralled for their own safety. In removing physical punishment, we need to find a healthy replacement.

Another comment mentioned often in the spanking poll had to do with spanking a child "out of love." I think this means the parent is disciplining their child because they love them. Yes, by all means, discipline your child when needed. My only request is that you consider not raising a hand or your voice to them in order to accomplish this. My methods have been to remove a privilege, after a warning. It might not be the best form of imposing limits on children but it works pretty well with my daughters ... most of the time. ;-)

One interesting comment was from a mother who said she only spanked her child when the kid was outright defiant. Well, you know, I wanted to consider that option for about two seconds! When my

older daughter is defiant, my immediate instinct is to smack her ... but I don't. She is now an inch taller than I am and almost outweighs me. Not a good time to start swatting her butt. She'd either laugh at me or hit me back. Neither option seems conducive to maintaining authority! As much as that option sounded tempting, it is not the answer. If we are to grow as a people, we need to adopt more humane methods of teaching our children to behave.

The comment that disturbed me most was from parents who said they did not spank their child "right away." The child is told they are going to be spanked while the parent goes somewhere else to "calm down" before doling out the dreaded punishment. Sorry, this one gives me the willies. To me, this is a method of psychological torture. Imagining a small child, probably a toddler (or an adolescent reduced to a toddler's fears) in this situation tears at my heart. If I were a child, waiting patiently for a spanking, I think I would seriously consider running away. Why stick around for a parent who is going to come back, irrationally calm in the face of my utter terror, and let them hurt me? I do not think this is a good idea, no matter what the circumstance. I would rather see a parent swat a kid on the butt from sheer frustration, as in the situation with a defiant child, than meditate on it a while and then do the deed. I'm sure I have just contradicted parenting advice many of you have heard by experts. These experts do not rate one inch in my life. I cannot imagine a competent child psychologist thinking that this is OK.

I am 100% committed to a no-spanking philosophy. I believe spanking will be outlawed in most countries within a few years. This practice has been a traditional tool of discipline for far too long.

Please, my dearest readers who do not share my opinion, I ask that you consider the alternatives. Many parents spank, simply for lack of a better solution. There are other solutions. It's not always easy, I know. Spanking is probably the easiest method of momentarily whipping a child in line, however, if we are armed with alternate choices that really work, we will be better parents.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters. She maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site, Rexanne.com - <http://www.rexanne.com> – Visit her site for good advice, award-winning Internet holiday pages and some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne: <http://www.rexanne.com/rwr-archives.html>

Spare the Child, Ditch the Rod

By Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC

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This philosophy's been around a long time.

In fact, a study done by Zero to Three, a nonprofit child-development group, found that 61 percent of the adults who responded condone spanking as a regular form of punishment. The percentage of parents who actually use spanking is believed to be much higher.

And when my five year old son's behavior went beyond annoying a few days ago, I felt inclined to join the majority and swat him to "teach him a lesson."

Most parents reach this point with their kids. We feel as though we can't take any more of what our kids are dishing out. It usually happens when we're tired, stressed, and overdone.

So what are our choices when we reach this point?

Spanking certainly can take care of things quickly and can temporarily change your kids behavior. But there are many reasons to question the practice of spanking your kids. Here's five of them:

1. Do you really want your kids to be afraid of you?

Kids will sometimes obey more readily when they're afraid of you. Is this what you really want? What happens when they're six feet two and two hundred pounds? Effective parenting is based on love and respect, not fear.

2. Spanking shows your kids that you lack self-control

The huge majority of spanking incidents come when a parent is angry. What is quite clear to your child is this: when my Dad or Mom gets angry, they hit me. And when the same child hits his sister

when he gets angry, do you demand that he shows

better self-control?

Something's wrong with this picture. We teach our kids best through our own actions.

3. You may breed resentment and anger in your kids

Kids who are spanked usually don't learn a great deal about "correcting" their misbehavior. They don't usually sit up in their rooms and say, "Gosh, I can really see after getting spanked that I was wrong. I'll do better now." They do think about how angry their Dad or Mom is, and they can develop a good deal of resentment for their parents.

4. Spanking shows your kids that "might makes right"

Adults make mistakes in their lives too, right? Can we use our imaginations and feel what it would be like for someone four times our size to pick us up and swat us on the butt? What would we learn from that? Would we feel any injustice? You can bet that your kids are feeling some.

5. Spanking isn't effective in the long run

Parents who are asked why they spank will report that they use it to "teach their kids a lesson," or so they won't misbehave again. Many kids who are spanked will go underground with their misbehavior and become more cunning to avoid being caught. (Wouldn't you?) If you're spanking your kids fairly often, doesn't this show that it's not working very well?

I don't believe that kids who are spanked occasionally are ruined for life. Nor do I believe that spanking is necessary to discipline a child. There are countless examples of disciplined and responsible young people who were never spanked by their parents.

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Parents who don't spank their kids use time outs, re-directing, or distracting with their kids. They can pick their kids up and let them cool down, or simply leave the area themselves so they don't do something they'd regret later.

While these methods aren't always perfect, they help to form the foundation of a certain kind of household: One in which violence is not "taught" as a means to better behavior.

After all, we live in a world that's filled with violence.

Can't we provide a place for our kids where there isn't any?

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, coaches men to be better fathers and husbands. He is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" <http://www.markbrandenburg.com/father.htm> For more great tips and action steps for fathers, sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>.



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