

Ways to Discipline Your Child Successful and Healthy

We're a consortium of family and parenting experts, with particular expertise in the spectrum of normative consequences as part of a fulsome behaviour management system. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the many serious flaws and factually false statements made in this opinion piece, particularly where it denigrates constructive physical discipline / moderate spanking.

Under "Proven Strategies that Work" the author lists Timeout. Timeout belongs to the "confinement" spectrum of punishments (timeout, confined to bedroom, grounded, to imprisonment). It gains its effectiveness from inflicted mental pain. All consequences derive their effectiveness by inflicting pain, whether physical, mental, psychological, so this piece contradicts itself when it promotes inflicted mental pain while simultaneously stating "Spanking a child teaches them that as an adult it's okay to cause the people you love physical and emotional pain"

Secondly, timeouts are already empirically proven to be substantially inferior in effectiveness compared to moderate spanking. (cite: Hoff, H 2012, Corporal Punishment: is it Effective" Iron Gate Research) especially in preteens.

Thirdly, Larzelere et al (OK State U) showed that a "Two swat spank" response to children escaping timeout was more effective than any other method, and soon gained compliance to observe timeout negating the spank back-up.

Now let's deal with the rhetoric made under "Why Spanking Should Remain in the Past Where it belongs":

- 1) "Spanking is not an ideal form of punishment" In fact it is. This is a nuanced science and one must differentiate moderate physical interaction against a spectrum of harsh physical punishments and other abusive treatments.
- 2) "Research today shows evidence of negative adult behavior from those who were spanked as a child." No in fact, there is no objective research that shows this, and we've collectively reviewed a thousand articles dealing with this. That so called "research" is usually confirmation biased opinion which does not screen for a variety of other abusive treatments, disengaged and aggressive parenting styles, or dysfunctional environments. In fact, 40 years of clinical research (Baumrind et al, Larzelere OK State U, et al, Gunnoe, Calvin MI et al) show that moderate physical discipline is more effective for 2-6 year olds than any other enforcement AND that the most optimum parenting style is Authoritative –highest in nurturance, demandingness and responsiveness. All Authoritative parents spank, but how they use it is important: occasionally and moderately as a BACK-UP to other methods (never a first line response and often one clear warning given) in a nurturing environment. These are your best developmental outcomes, not the positive-permissive-disengaged or aggressive/abusive styles.

- 3) "Adults who were spanked as children are more prone to hit their own children / wife". This is already debunked. Adults who were abused are more likely to be abusive, and that has nothing to do with constructive spanking.
- 4) "Anger and depression" is proven false. Forcing parents into the inferior positive-etc spectrum is what causes this. In 2013, the effects of New Zealand's 2007 "smacking" ban were studied, and showed the number of children being hospitalized for severe emotional / psychological problems DOUBLED since that ban. It is the ineffective parenting systems that cause these issues, not loving and firmly guiding parenting. (cite: Family First NX, 2016,"Defying Human Nature")
- 5) "Alcohol and drug abuse" this myth is utterly debunked. A 26-country study showed that alcoholism and drug-induced death rates were directly related to these "spanking" bans and in fact, the three EARLISET ban countries, Sweden, Norway & Finland have the highest composite harms from these issues. (Cite: Hoff, H, 2015, "Parental Spanking Bans: As Predictors of Future Societal Alcohol and Substance Abuse" IGR)
- 6) "Participate in violent crimes". No other myth has been more debunked than this one. Sweden was the first country to ban spanking in 1979. The cohort of children growing up under this ban was involved in serious assault and violent crimes 519% more than their prior counterparts. By 2010, Swedish Child on Child violence has escalated to 2,500% of pre-ban rates (cite: Robert E. Larzelere, Taren Swindle and Byron R. Johnson, Swedish Trends in Criminal Assaults against Minors since Banning Spanking, 1981-2010, International Journal of Criminology and Sociology, 2013, 2, 129-137). Today, 6 in 10 Swedish school children will be the victim of serious assault at school. Austria's 1989 ban was also studied and found that the youth growing up under that ban became FOUR times as violent per-capita vs. American youth. A 2002 WHO study found Austria had the highest bullying rates in school.

So, the author may have some personal ideological aversion to disciplinary spanking or consequences of any kind for that matter, and that is her prerogative. It is however, disturbing to see people regurgitate anti-spanking propaganda that has for some time already been utterly debunked (just like the 30 years of research proving tobacco causes no harms has been debunked).

Finally, consider that recent polls show the proportion of children spanked at least once as a preteen is: USA 86%, Canada 82%, France 87%, UK 85%. It would be much more constructive to explain how, when and why to use this method for optimum success, rather than printing propaganda that is in no one's best interest. Respectfully submitted on behalf the Keep 43 Committee of Canada, www.keep43.ca