

## HITTING CHILDREN IS WRONG

Children need discipline, and particularly need to learn self-discipline. But in addition to infringing on children's rights to human dignity and physical integrity, corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishments are ineffective forms of discipline.

## WHAT IS PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT?

Physical punishment is an action intended to cause physical discomfort or pain to correct a child's behaviour, to 'teach a lesson' or deter a child from repeating the behaviour.

Physical punishment may be administered with the hand or may involve the use of objects, such as rulers, canes, belts, whips and many other things.

Physical punishment does not always involve striking the child- sometimes the child is made to stay in an uncomfortable position, kneel on hard objects, lie in the sun with the face pointing upwards, or a foul substance is placed in the mouth of the child. In some extreme cases, children are burnt, scalded or lacerated.

## WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Discipline is an often misused word, especially when it is mistakenly seen to be the same as punishment. Unlike physical punishment, discipline is not a single act or any number of acts. It is the result of a process through which children are endowed with habits such as self respect, self control, confidence and proper pride in their own integrity.

The main goal of discipline is for children to understand their own behaviour, take initiatives, be responsible for their own choices, and respect themselves and others- the development of character in the form of social conscience.

Positive discipline ensures that children observe the norms of good conduct even when not under supervision and obey rules or a code of behaviour in both the short and long term.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT?

Physical punishment has negative and adverse effects on the well being and development of a child. Physical punishment.....

- **leads to injury**, causes pain and affects children's mental and emotional health.
- **sets a negative example** and provides a model of solving problems through violence, which leads to more aggression.
- **undermines an adult's respect** and weakens the relationship between adult & child.
- makes children **feel guilty and causes low self-esteem**, low self image, and low confidence.
- causes feeling of **insecurity, revenge, anger and resentment**
- **stifles initiatives and critical thinking**

## CREATING A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

To reduce misbehavior in the classroom, teachers can create a successful learning environment by:

**Starting right.** Take time to clearly explain to the students and their parents the standards you expect and why. The

students should know that discipline must be observed at all time and not only when they are in school.

**Creating classroom rules.** Clear and consistent rules act as guidelines for student behavior. Involve students in the rule-making process and post them in a place where students can see them.

**Establishing procedures.** Procedures let students know how to do routine tasks, such as entering and leaving the classroom, asking and answering questions, etc. Model the procedure for students, let them ask questions and be patient while they learn the process.

**Organising the classroom.** Make sure all students can see the blackboard and visual aids on the wall. Seat students next to classmates whom they can work with in an efficient manner.

**Establishing relationships based on respect.** Get to know your students, and understand their strengths and weaknesses (as well as your own). Involve parents in classroom activities and updates.

## POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES TO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

More effective alternatives to corporal punishment include:

**Positive reinforcement.** Using positive reinforcement in emphasizes a child's good behavior, and not any misbehaviour. It allows children to feel good about themselves, and the good behavior will be repeated.

**Praise.** Using praise lets children know their efforts are being noticed, and is very effective in raising motivation. Offer phrases like "Good job," "I'm really impressed", or "You are really trying!." Children will bloom under the sun of your appreciation.



## Child Protection Alliance

The Gambia

*“Protecting Children, Promoting Collaboration,  
Preventing Child Abuse”*

# PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN

*A Method of Discipline or A  
Violation of Rights?*

**FUNDED BY SAVE THE CHILDREN  
SWEDEN**

**Verbal warnings.** If a child continually misbehaves, calmly talk to the child and make clear what the consequences will be if it happens again.

**Wait time.** If a child seems frustrated or gets angry, allow them a few quiet minutes alone before talking about the issue.

**Taking away privileges.** In cases of serious or ongoing problems, this can be effective. Privileges could be playing sports or having free time with friends. Give the child work to do during these times

### POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TIPS

A great deal of good discipline simply involves avoiding problem situations or dealing with situations before they get out of control. Some valuable tips include:

**Set clear, consistent rule.** Children should know what kind of behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable to their parents and teachers. Involve children when making these rules so that they are aware of the consequences of misconduct beforehand.

**Focus on the desired behaviour, rather than the one to be avoided.** Focusing on certain behaviour, and rewarding that behaviour just to have some peace of mind does more harm than good. If a child knows that he or she can have what he or she wants by throwing a tantrum, that child will persist in that behaviour.

**Set a good example.** Do not expect that children will grow up any different from what they see around them.

**Allow children to experience the logical and natural consequences.**

**Be accessible.** Every child should feel that they have access to the head teacher or their parent if they have a problem. Something which seems unimportant to you may be an emergency in the eyes of a child.

**Explain why.** If you make a new rule, explain why it is necessary. Lack of communication is perhaps the greatest cause of disharmony between children and adults.

**Be consistent.** Children respond best to steady and consistent handling. They like to know where they stand. To have mood swings creates stress and confusion in the children and that can in turn cause indiscipline.

**Take action.** Take action before a problem gets out of hand or as soon as it occurs. The bigger the problem gets, the more difficult it shall be to deal with it.

**Practice what you preach.** If the child is not allowed to use dirty or foul language or to swear, neither should you.

**Do not use threats or shout at children.** It is better if children do as you ask because they understand the reasons why, rather than because they are frightened or bullied.

**Try and use ‘good’ words about the child.** Naming, bad-mouthing and humiliation lead to lower self esteem and can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Adults must take the leadership role by using techniques that inspire a positive atmosphere for ‘winning children over’ rather than winning over children.

Child Protection Alliance  
Fajara, The Gambia, West Africa  
Office: (220) 4498154  
Email: cpagambia@yahoo.com