

# PARENTING

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## INTRODUCTION

The information contained here is best understood before parents have children. More accurately, it is better understood well before marrying someone. Although the principles are valid into the teen years, the results from starting to apply them wane as the child gets older. It is optimal if these principles are followed from the time a child is able to knowingly disobey which can be as early as a few months old.

Bringing up children is an incredible responsibility. While nobody can do a perfect job, knowing and doing what's most important will help children grow up healthy. Below are some basic principles that by no means are meant to be exhaustive.

Spend time with your children. Selfishness keeps parents from directly interacting more. Even if you are incredibly busy, take some time each day, even if only for a few minutes, to do what your child likes to do. Then, depending on their age, invite them to be alongside you when you do everyday tasks as you continue to talk with them and teach them. If you are too busy to spend time with your children, then clearly you should also have no time for TV, video games, personal sports, or friends.

Do not have too many rules. Children need to be children and have fun. Again, our self-centeredness can make us want the house quiet all the time or not want to watch silliness and other childish norms. Although there is a time to train children to be calm and to use "inside voices," when there's no good reason to curb their natural exuberance, allow it. Do not insist that children act like adults.

This is a look at discipline which can be defined as redirecting a child's actions from unhealthy ones to healthy ones. Before delving into discipline, take a step back and look at the big picture. Being a parent is one of the greatest responsibilities one can experience. It provides an opportunity for personal growth, as well as perhaps the most important goal of parenting, which is to prepare children for the outside world. That requires a lot more than discipline. Children learn both by what they observe and what they are taught. Following the old adage, "**Don't do as I do; do as I say.**" is sure to cause inner conflict in a child's life. Children look up to their parents and wish to be like them.

The best way for a parent to train a child to have healthy habits is for the parent to first practice those habits themselves. That includes, for example, having and working toward goals that will ultimately be fulfilling, such as the use of time, how one eats and exercises, spends money, values friendship, and/or how they solve problems. So, parents who care about their children would do well to improve their own lives in every way they can. Parents are to love their children, which means doing what is best for them. Children need love according to their love languages more than they need discipline. Children receive love in different ways just as adults do. Love languages, as developed and written about by Gary Chapman in the book "The Five Love Languages", include Quality time, Gifts, Service, Touch, and Words of Affirmation. It is important to know how your child is loved and to love them in that manner. Even though children are less developed than parents in most categories, never forget that they are equal in importance. They may even be superior to parents as well in many categories, so parents would do well to learn what they can from their children.

Children need time with their parents. When they are very little they are incredibly perceptive and their family is their entire life. Parents can be busy with work and household chores. If they see daddy mowing the lawn or mommy cooking or doing dishes, it can make some sense to them why their parents aren't spending time with them. However, if they see their parents on the computer, watching TV, or on long phone calls with others, they are at best confused. They will become aware that their parents are choosing to spend time with something other than them. They will make at least a subconscious deduction that those things the parents choose to spend time on are more important than they are. The younger the little humans are, the more important it is for them to feel loved and cared for. Giving children your undivided time and care when they are young reaps benefits for the child and parents as the years go on.

The most important statement in this entire article is this,

**"Do not ever make a rule that you are not ready to enforce every time!"**

## **Teens Yesterday and Today**

Your child will grow up to be a teen. Much of what kind of teen, young adult, and adult they turn out to be will be a result of the way you parent them. Consider how parenting has become less strict over the decades along with the changes in teen health and behavior. The following changes in teen health and behavior are not intended to prove cause and effect. However, it is worth considering whether the changes in the way parents bring up their children may be a good part of the reason for the changes. Some might protest the correlation between changes in parenting and current issues of teen health. This resource intends to show that the parent needs to be the one in control. If that is so, they also have control over the child's screen time and the content that they are consuming. Studies find a correlation between screen time and content to the subsequent lack of physical exercise to teen physical and mental health. [Teen depression and suicide are up](#) (APA). The [percentage of teens 16-19 working](#) (St. Louis Fed) has decreased dramatically. They spend more and [more time in front of a screen](#) (Exploding Topics) for non-school or job-related reasons. Not only the time, but [the content is a concern](#). Parents tend to be less strict. More young adults (18-29) are living at home since the great depression, [from 29% in 1960 to about 50% in 2020](#) (Pew Research). A great percentage are still being [financially supported by their parents](#) (USA Today). While this is happening, [double the grandparents are working than 35 years ago](#) (Pew Research). If one looks at the big picture, Those 40-60 are sacrificing their retirement to help those 20-40, and those 60 and older who are physically struggling have to work harder. In a nutshell, double the grandparents are working so younger people do not have to work hard or so they can outspend their incomes. Consider this thought. Children who are expected to as appropriate by age, work hard at home and get part-time jobs in their early teens babysitting, doing yardwork, etc. will be trained to be hard workers throughout their lives. Those allowed to sit around and play most of the day will find having to work at a job to be a huge shock. The percentage of able-bodied men in the workforce has dropped from [87% in 1950 to 67% now](#) (St. Louis Fed). Preparing children to work hard is part of the parents' job to prepare their children for the outside world. [One in four](#) (AFPI) families is missing a father in the house. The number of fatherless households [has tripled](#) (Statistica) since 1970. The consequences of living in a fatherless house [are many](#). One of those consequences may be a diminished number of men who work for a living.

## **1 CONTROL**

### **Who is in Control?**

The person who gets their way over the will of another is in control. One could think of it as similar to many sports. The team with the ball controls the ball. The person in control in a household holds what we will call the "Control Token." For example, consider a household where the parent has the following rules. If they are followed, the parent has the "Control Token." If they are ignored and there are no consequences, the child has the "Control Token."

- No yelling in the house or car.
- No toys on the kitchen floor.
- The child is to come to the parent when called.
- If the parents say, "Stop running."

- If the child says "No" or ignores the parent.

When a parent outside the family who always retains the "Control Token" walks into another family's home, it does not take them long to see who is in control. Sadly, many parents can not see that they have given control of a significant part of the household over to their children. They might protest, "We've tried everything," or that "Kids will be kids." They can give many excuses for why their children are not obeying them. The reason they do not is that those parents have not trained the children to obey and hence handed the "Control Token" to their children. The "Control Token" is for adults only. In this view, it is like letting the child have the keys to the car. If you are reading this and protesting that children can be in control of the house, consider that whenever there are conflicting wills, the person who wins is in control. If you want your children to be quiet and they keep talking, they are in control, not you.

### **Let Them Run Wild**

This may sound like horrible advice. As bad as it may be, it is better than having any rules that will not have consequences if they are broken. It is better to let the children "run wild" rather than saying no and not having a consequence. There are consequences to letting children "run wild." "Running wild" means they are allowed to do what they want for a good part of the day. They may jump on the furniture and yell in the house. They will end up with bad habits, probably not be welcome at some people's houses, and may have some trouble when they start school. As bad as that is, it is better to let them "run wild" than to have rules like not jumping on the furniture or yelling in the house without consequences. To do so results in them holding the "Control Token" and learning to disrespect authority. If the parent's only rules are to stop when told to and come when called, and those are always enforced, the child would learn the most important lesson, to obey their parents. Then in another environment, when for example a neighbor tells them not to jump on their furniture or a teacher says to sit quietly, they will obey as they have been trained to obey. They know they do not have the "Control Token" and respect those who have it. Although still difficult, it is easier to change a habit (yelling inside) than to learn one's place, to learn to respect authority.

To put it another way, kids who jump on the furniture and run through the house could be viewed as "running wild". But often they are simply being kids and through their eyes, see the world as their playground. Kids who play hard are not the problem as more often than not, as they grow up, they will settle down. The problem is when the parent directs them to not jump on the furniture and when they do, does not enforce the rule.

## **2 CONSISTENCY**

### **Consistency Provides Needed Firm Boundaries.**

#### **Types of Inconsistency.**

1. Rules that change without reason.
2. Consequences at some times and not at others.
3. The two parents have different rules or consequences.
4. Arbitrary rules.

#### **Children Need Firm Boundaries**

There are several reasons why children need consistent, firm boundaries. It:

1. Gives them a feeling of safety.
2. Allows an environment for training
3. Helps protect them from harm
4. Prepares them for the future

#### **Children are Vulnerable and They Know it.**

Before looking at the importance of consistency, it is helpful to understand the needs and limitations of children. Consider how vulnerable a baby is. They are completely unable to survive without help. As they grow into toddlers, although they may be able to physically survive if the weather is warm and food is plentiful, they have no idea what the world is about, nor would their emotional needs be met. Even as children get older, they intuitively know that they cannot completely understand the world, take care of themselves, or make wise decisions. Children inherently know that the world is too big for them. When they rebel without consequence, they, not the parents, are in control of that situation. By not giving them a consequence, the parent has handed them a "Control Token" that they are not meant to have. Consider that police and bosses have the "Control Token" in most situations. Just as it would be wrong to see people defying police or their bosses, it is wrong for children to defy their parents.

### **Helping the Adult Understand: Firm boundaries make humans feel safest.**

There are similarities between the thinking process of an adult and a child.

#### **The Scenic Overlook**

Imagine being at a scenic overlook where there is a dropoff high enough that a person falling from it would surely die. If there was no railing, wise adults would stay far enough away that they would not be concerned about falling off. If there was a strong railing, most adults would feel safe going right up to the edge, perhaps even leaning over and looking straight down. The firm boundary not only provides physical safety, it also provides a strong feeling of safety.

#### **The Speeding Ticket**

Any adult who has been pulled over by the police and given a warning rather than a ticket received a consequence. If they were pulled over 10 times in a year and always got warnings, they most probably would not change their behavior. Consider a habitual speeder traveling 50MPH in a 30MPH zone. He knows the ticket will cost \$250 and insurance will increase by \$500 over three years. He gets pulled over 10 times.

- The first four times he gets a warning.
- The next two times, he gets a \$10 ticket, not reported to insurance.
- Three more warnings

He has been pulled over 9 times with next to no consequences. What will it take to result in a change? The \$250 ticket that will be reported to his insurance. For most people and most children, rules without consequences that outweigh the benefit of breaking the rule are at best confusing. An adult does not know how many times they could get pulled over without getting a ticket. They do not know how fast they could drive in a 30MPH zone to be at a real risk of getting a ticket. How much more is the confusion of a toddler or small child who keeps hearing empty warnings?

#### **The Rotted Floor**

Think of having to spend a few days in a vacant house with rotting floors. As you walk through, you would test different parts of the floor with part of your weight. When you found some areas that seemed to hold your weight, you would carefully trust those areas. It is similar for a child. They keep testing the limits looking for what they can trust in. They are pushing the limits until they find out where the parents take back the "Control Token." They are looking for what the limit of the area is that they can run free in.

#### **The Infectious Disease**

Another example is being in a hospital setting. The receptionist shares that they are busy; the exam rooms are all full so they are using a few of the lab rooms for exams. She sends you down the hall and warns you not to go into other rooms as they have had people in them with a horrible infectious disease and the rooms have not been cleaned. She notes that those doors are locked, "well most of the time," she says. Consider how different that experience is than if all the infected rooms were clearly marked and always locked. This is similar to little children navigating life when sometimes "no" does not mean "no." The

rooms with "no" on them are supposed to always be locked. When the child stands up to the parent and there are no consequences, the child just enters a scary room. They took charge of the family; they received the "Control Token." They feel insecure holding what they are not meant to hold

Subconsciously, they realize that everything beyond the door of discipline is unknown; it is scary. It is not an infection to them, but it is a big scary place. It is natural for them to keep spending time trying to open doors until they know the boundaries of the area where they can feel safe. That "trying doors" is misbehavior AKA rebellion time. The child is crying out for someone to stop them; to let them know that their world has limits. It is important to understand that just as it only takes one infected room with an unlocked door for an adult to feel unsafe, children do not feel safe when they even occasionally find that "no" does not mean "no."

Inconsistency in consequences also results in the child being confused. They do not understand why their parent has different rules and/or different consequences at different times. This is the result of the child standing up to the parents and getting away with it. They are then confused about who is in charge, them or their parents. Children need firm boundaries so they feel safe. Consistent consequences that make a child feel safe are the very thing that some parents do not want to do. The lack of them is like a missing railing or the unlocked door. The child finds that at times, they can do as they wish and there are no consequences. They will push their limits trying to find firm boundaries. They will try to find out when their parents will at last say no and mean it so they know where their limits are. When the child realizes that the parents mean what they say, the child will feel safe knowing the boundaries are firm.

When children can defy their parent's commands and get their way every once in a while, they will continue to defy their parents because they have been conditioned to get intermittent rewards. In other words, if they keep trying, they have learned that sooner or later they will get their way. Renowned Psychologist B.F. Skinner studied the effect of inconsistent rewards. *"The worst thing a parent can do (if the goal is to eliminate tantrums) is to give in to a tantrum occasionally. That is an intermittent reinforcement schedule, and it teaches persistence. Maybe this tantrum did not work, but the next one might! So the tantrums continue."*

In summary, when "no" does not mean "no," children find themselves walking around with the "Control Token" and they know they are not supposed to have it. So, they will keep pushing the limits until the parent acts like a parent and takes it from them.

### **Parents Who do not Provide Consistent Consequences Lack Knowledge or Character.**

Hopefully, after reading this, you will understand the importance of consistent discipline, and no longer lack that knowledge. Consistency is crucial in training a child, and the lack of consistency in rules and consequences is confusing and damaging to a child. If parents are aware of the importance of consistent boundaries and fail to enforce them, to be blunt, it stems from fixable character flaws in the parent. These can include:

1. Laziness
2. A desire to put fun ahead of loving their children
3. Looking to their children for fulfillment (needing to be liked by their children)  
Children may follow that example and learn to act so others will like them instead of doing what is right. They will be more apt to succumb to peer pressure, becoming chameleons.
4. Parenting from example. Parents tend to either follow their own parents' system or if they view it as abusive, they tend to parent to the opposite extreme,

### **Establishing Firm Boundaries**

### **Start out Consistently.**

Most everything in life works best when built on a firm foundation. Whether it be healthy living or financial security, greater success is reached when one uses sound principles and starts early. It is no different from bringing up children. For example, It is so much easier to teach a six-month to two-year-old that "no" means "no" than trying to start that lesson when they turn six. If your children are already past the infant stage and you realize that you need to make changes, even though it may be difficult, do it. Just be aware that the earlier, the better.

### **Utter Confusion**

Toddler's minds are fresh. Early on, they typically only have their caregivers to learn from. They learn from what their parents do and say. Two of the most effective one-word commands are "stop" and "no." The child must know that "no" and "stop" mean "no" and "stop" every time. "No" is used as an example below. "Stop" or "don't" can be interchanged with "no" as consistency is discussed.

### **Overview of Confusion Caused by Inconsistency**

Consider how completely confusing it is for a child to learn what "no" means when the outcomes are so different at different times. These are three ways different parents train their children.

1. CONSISTENT: When a parent says "no," the child understands it really means "no" because if they do not listen, there will be discipline.
2. CONSISTENT WHEN ANGRY: "No" only means "no" when the parent is very stern or yells.
3. INCONSISTENT: "No" does not mean anything at times because they can just continue with what they were doing and there is no consequence.

Children will learn very quickly if "no" always means "no" because whenever they do not listen, they experience an undesirable consequence.

Hopefully, parents looking at the three meanings of "no" will be able to understand the confusion it causes their child to not consistently apply consequences when the child does not respond to "no."

### **The Child Considers Why the Consequence did not Happen.**

When "no" does not consistently mean "no," in other words, there is no consequence at times for disobedience, the little child's mind has to figure out why. They will naturally try to think about what is different from this "no" and the previous "no" that they were disciplined for not obeying. Since their minds are not cluttered, they are quick learners. They may find that the "no" that means "no" every time is when it is said loudly. They may also learn that "no" seldom means "no" when other people are around, during a meal, or when in the car. They will act out more in those situations. Many times, they are unable to determine why "no" means "no" in some circumstances and does not in others.

From the child's perspective, when the parent says "no" or "stop" and the child continues their behavior without consequence, the word is without a clear meaning. This is crucial to understand. At a minimum, if a consequence is not going to be applied, the parent needs to say to the child something like, "Because of this situation, I'm not going to discipline you but don't expect that the next time you do the same thing." This is a consequence by definition. The child didn't obey and the consequence was a gentle warning. Occasional warnings can be effective and much more convenient than the application of discipline when in certain situations.

### **Consistency In Discipline: "No means No."**

Parents give all kinds of commands. Those commands either direct the child to do something or direct them to stop doing something. Many times the purpose of commands is to stop a child from doing something unsafe. The parent may say, "stop" or "no." These are



basic commands used to stop unwanted behavior. Training a child to obey these commands allows a parent to use them in almost every situation. Training a child to always obey these not only makes everyone's lives easier, but it could save them from serious injury or death. Rules are enforced in society. Love your child by enforcing them at home.

### **The Two Solutions**

There are two solutions and the parent who does not wish to confuse their child and have their child keep testing the limits must do both of them.

1. In some manner, enforce "no" every time.
2. Do not say "no" or give a "direct command" unless you are ready and willing to enforce it.

## **3 CONSEQUENCES**

### **Both Positive Reinforcement and Negative Consequences Redirect Behavior.**

#### **Positive Reinforcement**

Both positive reinforcement and negative consequences are effective. One of the best forms of positive reinforcement is praise when the child does as asked. When possible, reinforce with their love language. Positive reinforcement can start early. At times babies cry just to get attention. They have learned that when their diapers need changing or they are hungry and they cry, they get attention. So, just to get extra attention, they will cry. For example, a clean and well-fed baby is put down for a nap. If they do not want to be left alone or take a nap, they may cry. Many parents run in and give them attention. They learn that even when their needs are met, they get attention by crying. It is best not to reinforce unnecessary crying. Before you object, to be clear, children need attention. They need their parents' time. So, give it to them. But when you have given them time and met all of their other needs and they just want to make noise, do not reinforce it. Reinforce when they quiet down. As they grow up and you find them playing properly, using inside voices, or getting along with siblings along with any other desired activity, at a minimum, say something positive. You can also do something positive. When they are doing desirable things, along with telling them you are pleased, give them some time with you, a snack, or a hug. Do not believe that children are naturally supposed to do as they are told. That said, children do want to please their parents. It is positive reinforcement that "trains" all of us. Eating food which takes away hunger pains or receiving a paycheck after two weeks of work is positive reinforcement. In summary, make sure to give positive reinforcement for the actions you wish to continue.

#### **Ignore Some Unwanted Behavior**

At times children will do some things that if ignored, will most probably not happen as often in the future. Whining is a good example of this. A child interrupting, or saying "Daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy" to get dad's attention are other examples. One parent could say to the other. "I think Johnny wants to talk to us. It is too bad that it seems he forgot to be quiet and touch our leg and wait for us to respond." If people consistently do not get their way when practicing dysfunctional behavior, they will find a new way. In other words, children who want their parents' attention and can not get it whining and interrupting will follow the parents' guidelines for getting their attention. Since Johnny wants his parents' attention, he will quiet down and touch their leg.

#### **The Consequences have to Outweigh the Benefits**

We naturally weigh the benefits we receive and what it costs to attain them. Whereas we, the adults, may not be willing to do any kind of work for \$10/hour, we may be willing to do a job we hate for \$500/hour. The benefit must outweigh the cost. If a child can disobey and have their way and the discipline cost is very low, why not? The discipline must be significant enough that the child will find it not worth it to disobey.

#### **Different Children, Different Discipline.**

Study your children. Find out what they do not like. Find out what they like. Some children will laugh in your face if spanked. Do not spank them harder to cause severe pain. Write out the list specifically for each of your children if you do not have it memorized. There are a multitude of things each child does during the day, and many toys they may play with. There are things they really do not like, whether sitting in the corner, getting a swat, a squeeze on the shoulder,

**Giving Mercy** is different than not being consistent. Giving mercy is you specifically telling them that they deserve discipline for the offense and you are withholding it this time. Never give mercy when it comes to them not complying with their consequence, rather increase the consequences as they protest and disobey. Should you give mercy, be aware that the child may see it as a gap, as inconsistency. They may try to find that gap again. Be clear with them about the difference between getting away with something and mercy.

### **The Child's Refusal to Accept the Consequence.**

For example, if the consequence is to sit in the corner and for example, the five-year-old child is told, "Go sit in the corner for five minutes and think about what you did." Should they protest and not obey, say, "Now your corner time is six minutes. It is very easy for me to increase your time in the corner. This is up to you." The more they protest or do not immediately head to the corner, the higher the count goes. "Now it's seven minutes!" If they make noise while in the corner, a minute or more is added. A suggestion is to start the initial number of minutes to be roughly equal to their age. It should always be done without anger. For example, simply say, "That's three more minutes" and add three minutes to the timer you are using. If they protest it again, add on another three minutes stating what you just did. There is no discussion from the child allowed. The rules were set ahead of time that they were to sit quietly.

### **Types of Consequences**

The consequences may be different for each child. There are two aspects to consequences. One is something they do not like and the other is taking away what they like. It can be particular toys, being able to go to somebody's house, watching a show on a TV, or playing a video game. It could be time playing with you. It could be taking away any type of snack or treat. Make a list of them for each child. All of the consequences need to be age-appropriate. The other is doing to them what they do not like. For example, it can be a swat on the rear, time in the corner, or having to help with adult chores.

### **Toddlers**

First, when children are very young, even months old, they must learn what "no" and "stop" mean. When they reach out for something that they will hurt or will hurt them, training and discipline might look like moving their hands away or moving their body away while saying "No." They start to relate to the parent saying those words and when they do not change their behavior, the parent changes their location (picking them up and moving them,) They learn that when they listen, they are allowed to continue to do what they may want to do. Many, if not most toddlers, if they have been trained like this will know what "no" and "stop" mean well before they are one year old.

### **Physical Discipline Option**

It is possible that some readers may be tempted to stop reading this resource when they see that it includes a section on the measured use of physical discipline. This would be a case of "throwing out the baby with the perceived dirty bathwater." Before doing so, consider that:

- The use of measured physical discipline is presented as an option and is not integrated into this resource as "the" only, or even best way to discipline.
- Appropriate physical discipline as described in this resource could be defined in this manner: A firm, but not overtly hard, squeeze/pressure between the neck and

shoulder, or one to three swats/spankings on the rear, done while not reacting, and most certainly without anger or a raised voice. It (appropriate physical discipline) also includes a discussion of the offense before and after the discipline.

- Most people who are against physical discipline have either read flawed studies that do not differentiate between "appropriate physical discipline" as described above and inappropriate beatings and/or shaking while yelling at a child. ([More here.](#)) It is important to make that distinction. Others may have personally experienced, or know of someone who experienced significant physical discipline done in anger. This unfortunate reality is something this resource does not endorse in any fashion.
- An internet search will reveal a significant amount of written literature indicating that yelling has the same negative impact as physical discipline. (Wbur) It has been said that "yelling is the new spanking." ([Care](#)) Almost all parents (90% or more), including those who abhor physical discipline, unfortunately, yell at their children. ([More here](#))
- If one believes that both yelling and spanking are bad, why consider physical discipline? Because internet searches will confirm the lack of studies on the effects of spanking alone, that is done without anger. It is the position of this resource that there is not any significant evidence that physical discipline similar to that as described in this resource results in harm to a child. As with all information, you are strongly encouraged to use due diligence and complete your own research related to this topic. Should you come across any studies that investigate moderate physical discipline as described here, without anger or yelling, please contact us through this website.

If you are comfortable with moderate physical discipline, James Dobson, Christian psychologist, well-known author, and founder of "Focus on the Family" teaches an option which is to give a squeeze between the neck and the shoulder to administer a consequence. It is immediate and can be administered almost anywhere. Whether it is a swat to the rear or a squeeze, use it quickly, decisively, and with gentleness and a caring spirit. If there is no question "Johnny" heard his name, walk over and administer some discipline while saying. "[Johnny, I told you to come over here and you walked away. You need to look at me when I call your name.](#)"

Discipline of any sort must be painful. If a toddler is reaching for something dangerous, a gentle swat to the back of the hand may not cause any pain but it may be emotionally painful to the child to have their parents swat them. If they pull their hand back and do not repeat the behavior, there is no reason for their discipline to be physically painful at all. For most small children, the squeeze is quicker and more appropriate than a swat or spanking. The other extreme is to give children several hard spankings. It is very unusual for that to be appropriate or optimal. If a couple of good swats on the rear, or a firm squeeze near a child's shoulder does not change their attitude or behavior, do not keep using physical discipline. The desire is never to hurt a child but to redirect them through pain just as pain redirects adult behavior. Physical pain stops adults, even stubborn tough ones in their tracks. For example, athletes can not keep running on a sprained ankle. We do not take hot pans out of the oven with bare hands. Find out what causes some sort of pain for the child and use those things. There are many [types of consequences](#). A child who might laugh when spanked may cry if they [can not play their video game](#) (YouTube video of teen melting down when he can not play his game.) It may be very painful for them.

The younger they are, the more important it is to have a shorter time between offense and consequence.

This brings up consistency when disciplining. Whereas, it is just fine to give mercy and say, "I'm not going to put you in the corner this time," once you say that they are to go to the corner, they must go to the corner, every time, no matter how much of a fight it is. And the result of any fight is for you to keep adding on minutes until they get to and stay in the corner as they are being told to do. If the fight goes on for a long time and the child is able to avoid the corner, the lesson they learn is that they keep the "Control Token" by wearing their parents down. Unless you want all-out war trying to get compliance out of your children, never, never back down from the discipline once it is set.

#### 4 CHOICES

**You Can't Make Your Child do Anything!** You can only give them choices.

Understanding this helps significantly when redirecting your child's behavior. Adults do this throughout the day. We choose the food we prefer or an easier way to do a task. Almost every moment, we are making choices. We do not make a painful choice unless it is short-term pain that we trade for a long-term benefit, like exercising. At times, we make painful personal choices because that choice brings benefit to another. When directing your child toward healthy behavior, make the option (the discipline) something less appealing than what you do not want them doing.

Choice 1	Choice 2
Go to the corner	<a href="#">Physical discipline</a> or taking away an additional toy or privilege every 15 or so seconds that they do not comply.
Finish your dinner	Skip dessert
Stop when I say stop	The video game will stop for a day
Come to me when I tell you	I will come to you and put you in the corner for 5 minutes.

#### 5 COMPLIANCE

##### The Progression of Training and Discipline: Crossing the Street

###### Toddlers

Walking toward the street a toddler may point and say, "I go there." If the parent responds, "no" and the child keeps walking toward the street, it's rebellion and must be disciplined. The child approaches the curb and the parent responds, "Stop." If they do not stop, the discipline is for not obeying "no" and "stop," not for getting too close to the street. The toddler must first learn to obey those simple commands. There are far too many dangerous things out there for them to learn to stay away from at an early age. The foundation that protects them from everything is learning to obey "no" and "stop,"

Telling a child to stop when they are approaching the street, although more important, is the same as a parent saying stop when the children are roughhousing in the dining room. If the child starts running and the parent says "stop" and the child doesn't listen, there must be consequences. That consequence should be the same whether or not, for example, the vase that used to be Grandma's got broken or nothing at all happened. Grandma's vase getting broken is the parents' consequence for not enforcing "stop" in the preceding months or years when nothing got broken.

###### Little Children

No parent would want to see their child badly hurt or killed. Using the same example above, there is no question that a busy street is a dangerous place. Good parents teach their children to look before walking out into the street. If the child walks into the street without looking, there needs to be a consequence (discipline or more training) to teach them not to do so again. It does not matter whether there was a close call or not. They did something that if repeated often enough, will be dangerous. The lesson for the parents here is that rules are meant to be followed every time, whether not following them results in a bad consequence or not. A child who walks into the street without looking is not being disciplined for doing something possibly dangerous. They are being disciplined for not obeying their parents' clear teachings. If a parent differentiates between commands that are not followed that could lead to a dangerous result and those that may not, the child learns to use their judgment as to whether it is important to listen to the parents' teaching.

## **Rebellion**

### **What About When the Child says "No?"**

What does it mean when your child says "no" to your command?

"No" is rebellion, pure and simple. "No" from a child is a punishable event. If a child is allowed to say "no" to their parent without consequence, the child has taken control. It's not cute. It is not acceptable, ever! There are households where children have only said "no" to their parents once and in some households it has never happened. That success happens when training is very early, first teaching consistently that the toddler can say for example, "I don't want to" but is never to say "no." When they do so, it is the child saying that they, not you, are in charge of what goes on in the household. It is them grabbing for the "Control Token." It does not matter if they only say "no" one out of ten times they are told to do something. They still are in charge. They still choose what they will comply with and what they will not. If they can ever say "no" without a consequence, they always hold the "Control Token."

## **Using wisdom to gain compliance**

**Walk Away:** There are many types of consequences. Parents can make clear they hold the "Control Token." An example is when out in public, parents tell their children to walk with them. At times, they will test the parents' resolve. They will not follow. Assuming it is a safe environment, walk away! It is very unusual for that child not to come running. Parents who plead or threaten give the "Control Token" to the child. The parent wishes to move the family to a different location and the child will not follow. The child is in control. Teaching children to follow their parents very early on makes life easier for everyone.

## **Tantrums**

A child throws tantrums from time to time. They shake their head, scream, wave their arms, and jump up and down. Several options keep the "Control Token" in the hands of the parents. 1. Ignore them. 2. Tell them to do so in their rooms. 3. Give another option: "Hey, it is fine for you to throw tantrums at our house but you have to do it right. No partway tantrums are allowed around here! You are to do ALL of what you are doing at the same time. Shake your head, wave your arms, scream, and jump up and down at the same time! Do you understand?" The child struggles and the whole purpose of their tantrum evaporates. When the next tantrum happens, "Hey! I told you, no halfway tantrums. You're not jumping!"

## **Whining**

The best way to deal with whining may be to ignore it. Let the children know that you are unable to understand them properly when they are whining. When the children whine, talk to each other saying you hear noise and wonder what it is all about.

## 6 CIRCLE OF TRUST

As children grow, parents allow them to get further away. The distance from the parent in all directions creates what could be called a circle of trust. A young toddler will typically be within reach with a few steps. As they grow into teens, they are allowed to be miles away at times. It is our trust that they will be safe that should determine how distant they can be.

### Words or Walls

Some parents are able to keep their children out of danger with only words. Other parents find that at times they need to physically keep their children from danger. Virtually every child can be trained to obey simple verbal commands ("stop", "no", and to look when their name is called) It is important to understand that in dangerous situations if you do not trust your child to respond to your words 100% of the time, they must be kept within reach. For any that do not agree that 100% obedience is needed consider what 99% looks like. That means that in 1 out of 100 dangerous situations, for example, being near a street or a dropoff, your child will be in extreme danger because they did not listen that one time. If you are not convinced and convicted enough about the importance of 100% obedience, consider children killed as pedestrians relative to auto accidents. About 80% more children 1-4 are killed as pedestrians (Crash Stats) compared to 10-14 year-olds. Adolescents do a better job of staying away from moving vehicles than some parents of pre-schoolers do protecting their children. Less than 100% obedience means you must be able to outrun them and grab them before they reach danger. That distance creates the circle of trust. When children have not been trained for 100% obedience, that circle is small.

Most of the time, children who respond consistently to verbal commands do so as the result of early training. The parent's ability to control using words started early on by giving simple commands like "stop" and when the child disobeyed, there would be some sort of consequence. Early on, it could be as simple as picking up the child and saying, "I said stop." The directive, the primary job description given to parents, is to prepare their children for the outside world. In the outside world, it is verbal communication that adults use to request a change in the behavior of others. For example, we learn to say "excuse me" rather than physically moving someone out of our way.

Some parents do not wish to discipline their little children when they do not obey "stop" or "no." The result is that the child will normally not consistently obey those commands. The "command compliant" child can be allowed increasing distance and freedom. If they are walking toward danger, the parent only needs to call out the child's name, and the child will stop. That child's circle of trust is as distant as their earshot. The child that is not "command compliant" must be kept within a quick run or arm's reach of the parent. Less than 100% compliance creates a very dangerous situation particularly when other people are caring for your children. The children may seem to listen so the caregiver assumes they are "command compliant." Because of this, the caregiver allows the child to be in an earshot circle of trust. But say that the child is headed toward danger, toward the street for example. The caregiver calls out their name and yells for them to stop but the child chooses to ignore the commands. The caregiver can not run fast enough to reach them and they enter the street. If your child is not 100% "command compliant," you need to let the caregivers know so they can apply the proper circle of trust.

### Choices for Parents

Parental choice #1: Take the time and energy to train the child to obey verbal commands. Result: The child can be given a considerable amount of freedom and allowed to wander at a significant distance from the parent or caregiver. They have a large "circle of trust."

Parental choice #2: Do not train the child to always obey verbal commands.

Result: In order to keep the child from danger, the parent or caregiver must keep the child, so to speak, within arms reach when there is anything dangerous present. The parent needs to be a living wall.

## 7 COMMON SENSE OF THE CHILD

### **The Child's Ability to Judge.**

It is important to digress here for those who may not agree or understand the concept of the child using their own judgment. Parents will have many rules. At early ages, the importance of those rules can range from "Don't walk in the street." to "Don't walk on the couch." If the child receives a consequence for disobeying the first command being told how dangerous it is but there is no consequence for disobeying the second command, the logical conclusion for the child is that they need to obey only when the child perceives a situation as dangerous. Far too early in life, if consequences are not consistent, they will also start using their own judgment to determine which rules are or are not important, and which ones should and should not be obeyed. Since children are intellectually unable to understand the reasons for most rules on their own, they naturally feel insecure. Children who have to find their own reasons for rules, subsequently decide which rules to obey. Most of the time, a young child is not able to use their own judgment to determine what is and what is not dangerous. For example, a child may view a street that has very little traffic as safe to run out into it without looking carefully first. The important training for the child is that they obey their parents about everything. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children. Some do a poor job of it. That for example results in the high pedestrian death rate of toddlers. A considerable part of what you have read and will read here is about teaching a child that "no" means "no" and "stop" means "stop." The street is only one of many dangerous things in life.

Whereas it is profitable for a child to teach them to use their own judgment, they must never think that their judgment is superior to their parents' judgment. They are to be taught to blindly obey their parents rules, every time. They will learn to do so if there are always consequences for breaking their parent's rules. The primary training of a child is not to teach them to discern danger but rather to listen to and trust their parents.

### **The Child's Limitations**

One could walk blindfolded across many streets 100 times without incident. Just because an action can be repeated without incident a multitude of times does not mean it is wise or that sooner or later that action will not result in serious injury or death. Even as adults, as we age, we continue to gain more experience as we witness or hear about those one out of 10,000 catastrophic events that happen and the consequences that follow. Children have neither the experience nor the capacity to analyze different scenarios in life to know what is safe or unsafe, and surely not what is best in the long term. For example, they may be able to go a year without brushing their teeth and have no cavities. The priority of teaching the child to trust and obey over using their own judgment continues into adolescence. Hopefully even as a child approaches adulthood, the parent's judgment will still be superior.

The training process is fairly simple.

1. Teach them to do exactly what they are told to do.
2. Explain the purpose of rules as appropriate.
3. Teach how to think for themselves while still being obedient.

## 8 COMMON GROUND

### Consistency Between Parents

When there is inconsistency between parents, children are confused. They learn to manipulate and will work one parent against another. They will tend to run to the parent who has fewer rules and lower or no consequences. They will try to figure out what real love looks like. Is it the parent being nice and letting them break the rules without consequences or the parent being firm? This is confusing and unsettling to the child and they will most probably act out to find out where the firm boundary is. Parents need to find common ground both in rules and that there will be consequences. Although it is best to have consistency in discipline, parents can each administer different consequences. Consequences include physical discipline, taking away privileges, sitting in the corner, or having to help with adult chores. Children will get used to mom and dad having different ways of disciplining.

### Finding Agreement If You Have not Been Consistent With Consequences.

Have a meeting with your spouse to go over what the rules will be and that there will be consequences. You must both agree to be consistent in applying consequences for the rules you set.

There are two aspects to agree on. One is simple and if not agreed on by both parents will result in continued confusion for the children. "do not make a rule you are not ready to enforce." The other is to agree on what rules will be enforced. Write down the list of rules that you both agree to enforce. At times, one of the spouses may, even after reading this, not be willing to enforce rules 100% of the time. There are three possible scenarios.

1. One parent will stand in the way of 100% compliance with some rules. In this case, it is better to take that rule off the table. It is better to have next to no rules than for the children to watch their parents fight over discipline. Let the children know which of the prior rules no longer apply. For example, if one parent fights the other parents enforcement that the children are not to jump on the furniture, let the children know that it is now ok to do so. This will be difficult for the spouse who wishes not only to protect property, but also to teach their children to respect certain household things. The children may end up jumping on furniture in other people's houses and that may be very embarrassing to the parent who does not want to allow it. As painful as that may be for that parent, it is better than to have the child break household rules without consequences and end up having the "Control Token."
2. One parent will not be consistent but will not fight the other parent doing so. In this case, both parents sit down with the children and let them know. Dad might say, "Sometimes I'm tired and do not like to discipline. That doesn't mean that it is okay to disobey. You can count on Mommy to give you consequences every time you disobey."
3. Both parents agree to enforce the household rules even though they may have different consequences.

### Different Parents, Different Rules

For example, one parent does not want the children screaming in the house and will give a consequence and the other does not care or will not give a consequence for it. The children are told that when that one parent is home, the children are not to scream in the house. Even though both parents allow different activities, there is a set rule. "When Dad is home, there is no screaming in the house."

### Transition Period:

If you have been doing it "wrong" for a while, have a talk with the kids and consider apologizing for not being consistent in rules and or discipline and tell them that things are going to be different and tell them what it is going to look like. For example: "If you



disobey or act out, you will be told to sit in the corner for a period of time. If you make noise or get out of the corner early, somewhere between one and five minutes will be added on for each time you make noise or leave the corner." It is helpful for the children if you have a grace period where you take a few days and say something like "Starting Friday you would be in the corner for 10 minutes for what you just did. We're giving you some time to get used to the consequences that will start then." Explain that there will be a transition time. "For the first few days, while you are getting used to the new rules, we may choose to not always give you a consequence but we will warn you each time you misbehave that starting Friday, you will experience them."

## **9 COMMUNICATION**

### **The Communication Process Between Parents and Children.**

Children can be noisy and distracted. A several-word command may easily not be heard or if heard, not understood with all the chaos of their fun. Avoid them not hearing you. The following process, when followed consistently by the parent, not only makes the child's life safer while giving them the most freedom possible but also reduces miscommunication.

1. Call the child's name. When they hear their name they are to stop whatever they are doing and make eye contact (depending on culture) with their parent. Consider that a toddler is headed towards the street and they are trained to obey this rule. They will stop just hearing their name. Without another word, you can motion with your finger to come to you, or your hand to stop so they know not to go further. If you are positive they have heard you, and they will not look, that is rebellion, and MUST have a consequence. If you can not get them to look at you, they, not you, are in control.
2. Give the verbal command. Hand commands also work well here. (For those who may object that this is similar to how an animal is trained, consider that this is how police direct adults in noisy environments.) Among others, parents can use the hand command for "stop" or a finger to "come here". If the rule is important, and the child has a habit of not remembering, or if they seem distracted at the time, ask them to repeat what you said. It is amazing how effective this is when managing employees. It significantly reduces miscommunication. Start your children out early with good communication skills.

## 10 COMPLETING THE LOOK AT PARENTING

### **Desire vs. a Direct Command**

An option to giving a direct command that a parent is unwilling or unready to enforce is for the parent to express their desire. This is an example of presenting a desire rather than a direct command.

- Direct command: "Your room is already messy. Don't take out any more toys until you clean it up."
- Desire presented: "I don't like seeing your room so messy."

Some parents may discipline a child for not doing what their parents like. However, they did not necessarily rebel. They simply chose their own pleasure ahead of their parent's pleasure. If you are not going to give a consequence, frame all those desires for their behavior as your desires rather than giving a command that you are unready to enforce.

### **Rebellion vs. Childish Irresponsibility.**

It is very important to understand the difference between rebellion and childish irresponsibility. Children forget at times. They may be caught up in a moment and knock over a lamp just having fun. They may not have heard you call them. They may have a habit they are trying to break. They may not be as careful in situations where an adult would. Those are examples of childish irresponsibility. Do not discipline childish irresponsibility. Talk about it with them. Teach them. It is not rebellion. Rebellion is when your instructions are clear, they are age-appropriate, you know they understand and remember them, and they disobey you. Rebellion must have consequences.

### **When You are Unsure if it is Rebellion.**

There may be some times when it is hard to tell. If unsure, it is best not to discipline. You can tell the child that you think they may have disobeyed on purpose but you are unsure, so they get by without a consequence.

It may not be disobedience or rebellion the first time a child says "No" or the first time they share a swear word with you. Many if not most first offenses are opportunities for training, not for discipline.

Asking some questions can help a parent determine the child's motive. Incidentally, asking similar questions when adults have conflict with each other is very profitable in determining motive as well. This is an example:

- "Do you remember me telling you to look both ways before crossing the street?"  
"YES!"
- "Did you remember it at the time you crossed without looking?"
- "YES!" Then why did you not look? CHILD: "I didn't hear any cars." or "I never see cars when I've looked other times."
- "NO!" "I have told you many times." (A couple of options: 1. "Write out 20 times on a piece of paper." "I will look both ways before crossing the street." or "Walk with me out to the street and say it 20 times to me." 2. "For the next few days, from time to time, I'm going to ask you what you are supposed to do before crossing the street.")

YES is disciplined. The child needs to understand that whether the rules are followed or not is not up to their determination of whether the rule is valid. If they believe a rule (not a time-sensitive one like "stop") should be able to be broken under certain circumstances, they are to ask their parents first.

NO, unless a parent is sure the child is lying, does not result in discipline. It is childish irresponsibility which has a different type of consequences depending on age, and that is more training. In other words, if it is a 2-year-old and you have only told them once, the

retraining is to have them look you in the eye, remind them, and have them repeat it back to you. The older they are, the more times you have told them this rule and they have still forgotten, and the more intense the training must become.

### **Arbitrary Rules**

Children need to have the world make sense to them. For example, if rules change when the situation doesn't, they will be confused and will at least subconsciously keep trying to determine the real purpose of the rules. At some point in a child's development, perhaps when they approach their teens, they will have enough judgment capability to know that some of the rules they were given as a child were not fair. For example, they may see that their friends can do many things that they are not allowed to do. The parents may say something like it is not safe for them to go to events or engage in activities that almost all their friends are allowed to do. They can see that some of their friend's parents are good and strict parents, so they not only protest that rule but start to wonder about the validity of the reason for all other rules. They may start to question all the rules going forward, wondering if they are in place for their protection or the parent's convenience. If the parent had framed the rules as being best for the child, the teenager may lose respect not only for the parent but for the value of the rules.

It is not wrong for a rule to be for a parent's convenience but if it is so, it is best to state it. There are a lot of rules parents give children for the parent's convenience. The rule, "[Use an inside voice](#)" is both good training for the child and convenient for the parents. "[When I'm on the phone, play in your rooms.](#)" is a rule for the convenience of the parent. It is best to be transparent when appropriate.

Example:

"[Can I go to my friend's house? All my friends are going to be there playing a game. No. Why not?](#)"

General arbitrary answers. "[I do not want you to go there.](#)" or "[Because I said so.](#)"

Transparent answers. "[I need your help today.](#)" or "[I'm too busy to drive you over and back.](#)" or "[I do not want to take the time to drive you over and back.](#)"

By being transparent, the child understands why they are not being allowed to do something. It is also good for them to see that other's needs will have priority over theirs. They can learn not to be selfish.

### **Anger**

Many parents are overtly angry with their children. Children, especially young ones, do not know how to process anger. So, what do they do with it? They have choices about why it is happening. These choices might include:

1. It is the parent's problem. True, but it is unlikely the child will see this for several reasons. One is that the little child considers the parent to be flawless. As the child grows up, as mentioned in "[Parenting From Example](#)," if the child sees the parent as flawed, they lose hope for their upbringing and that is extremely painful.
2. It is because of their misbehavior. The parent's anger most probably happens with all sorts of misbehavior. That results in it being hard for the child to think the parent is angry about so many things. It is difficult to make all the connections.
3. It is because of the child being bad. This is all that's left. It is the common denominator of all the misbehaving. The parent seems, and most probably is, angry with the child. Something must be wrong with the child whenever they do wrong. So, the child links behavior and value.

When the parent yells at, or uses physical discipline when angry, the child believes that their misbehavior, or even at times their mistakes, mean that they are bad. This view will carry over into adulthood. Children and adults alike, who link their behavior to their value will tend to be defensive, having a hard time admitting wrong. Subconsciously, they view being wrong as being bad. It may also result in them judging those who do bad things, as

being bad. Adults who grew up with parents being angry at them can find healing through many pathways including books and counseling.

An internet search "yelling at kids" results in articles that have significant similarities. They list the resultant problems in children who are yelled at when they misbehave. The below list is not intended to be viewed as a study. The numbers below are the number of articles the consequence was noted in.

#### Long-Term Consequences

1. Low self-confidence 9
2. Depression 9
3. Behavior problems get worse 7
4. Anxiety 6
5. Medical conditions 4
6. Fear 3
7. Aggressive Behavior 2
8. Yelling changes the way their brain develops 2
9. Interpersonal problems

#### Immediate Issues

1. Kids Can Not Learn in "Fight-or-Flight Mode"
2. Yelling Can Interfere with Bonding

Many of the consequences are secondary ones. In other words, the primary consequence of expressed anger when a child misbehaves is that the child links doing wrong things to being a bad person. They link their behavior to their value. When a teen or adult makes a mistake, subconsciously they feel that mistake makes them bad or flawed. That will result in low self-esteem, and if that continues, the likely consequences are anxiety and depression. Since children and adults alike will never be able to perform perfectly, until they overcome the effects of anger during their childhood, they will always feel at least somewhat flawed when they make mistakes. That is why many adults have a hard time simply admitting they made a mistake.

If there is no reason to raise one's voice because of a noisy environment or distance to the child, commands should be given with a quiet voice, similar to how the adult would like to be talked to by another adult. Anger has no place in the discipline of children. Most of the time anger surfaces because the child has the "Control Token" and the parent resorts to bullying through a raised voice or getting physical with the child to get it back. Consider that since the parent would not normally get angry or physical, by not listening right away, the child controls the parent's behavior. It could be said that they got you mad or got you to be physical. You lost control not only of the child but of yourself! Most children will give in if the parent's anger becomes intense enough. Even a rebellious child will give in at a particular level of anger and they learn what that level is. They know that up until that level, they hold the "Control Token." Knowing that, when they want their way, they will defy the parent until the parent almost reaches the known level of anger. The child is not giving in to their parent's demands because the option, i.e. the discipline, is less desirable than what they want to do, but rather out of fear of their parent's anger. They do not know what may happen if the parent becomes more angry. They actually still hold the "Control Token" because they have been able to control the entire dynamic of the household at that point. They have been able to push their parent to a place where the parent is not in control and then, when they fear the consequences of going further, they comply. One might think that the parent-controlled the child by being angry and yelling. Whereas there is some truth to that, using anger and yelling as a consequence for misbehavior is dysfunctional, damaging to the child, and not anything similar to the consequences for misbehavior that they will face in the outside world. An internet search of "yelling at kids" will result in

finding many websites explaining the negative impact that it has on children. The consequence for misbehavior must be expressed to the child ahead of time. The parent explains that if you do this, then that is the consequence. That is night and day different from controlling the child with anger. What is interesting is that there are parents who think that it is abusive to give a child one or two swats on the rear or to squeeze between the neck and shoulder. That is physical discipline. But they do not consider it abusive when they yell at their children in anger to get compliance through the child's fear. At times, parents who call a spanking "hitting" the child, resort to forcefully grabbing and squeezing the child while angry to get compliance. They cause physical pain and do so when angry. To be blunt, any compliance gained using anger is dysfunctional parenting. The option, i.e. the solution, is rather than increasing the level of anger and loudness of one's voice, to instead increase the amount of discipline the child will face for rebellion.

- "I can add minutes to your corner time easier than you can continue to defy me." (See "the 10-point system" below.)
- "I can take away more and more of your privileges until you decide to obey. OK, no more phone today. Now, no more video games. No more TV. No more playing with your favorite toy. No time with friends tomorrow. How much do you want to give up so you can continue to disobey me? OK, now you owe me 10 minutes of extra work. I can keep adding minutes on. I could use the help."

Have your list ready. If you use physical discipline, use it after the first point of rebellion. You have the "Control Token." There is no reason for anger because you should expect rebellion from time to time and you have the answer to it. It is just part of your day being a parent. The first condition that can result in anger is one or more unrealistic expectations. Consider the attitude of judges. Most of them, when sentencing are quite stern, pointing out the infraction and the seriousness of it. However, they seldom express anger. They hold the "Control Token." The criminal is sent to prison. The attitude that is healthy for both parents and children alike is for the parent to be similar to a judge. The exception is that when disciplining, the parent does best to express love. It looks something like this: "I love you. You didn't come when I called you. Now you need to sit in the corner for 4 minutes. I hope you learn to listen soon. I do not like to see you in the corner any more than you want to be there."

### **Repeated Commands**

Some parents repeat the same command over and over and over again. If the first step is to call the child's name and the child is to look at the parent, then the child will hear the command the first time. What is the purpose of repeating it? It is a habit and it causes all kinds of confusion. If a parent typically repeats a command 2-3 times but at times repeats it in one way or another 4-5 times, the child is conditioned not to obey the first time. There normally is not a consequence for not obeying quickly. Everything is confusing for the child to know at which repeated command the parent will take action. Normally repeated commands are louder each time and that is discussed in "Anger." Even if they are not, they are confusing, and repeated commands do not train a child for school or employment. They may even struggle in relationships with friends when the friend asks them to stop doing something. The solution is simple. Call the child's name. When they look at you, give the command. If they do not comply, give them the consequence.

### **The 10-Point System**

This is a great system for children between about four and fourteen, and it keeps the parents from feeling out of control. The child continues to misbehave and the parent just keeps adding on points, taking away privileges. It does require the parent to either remember or write down what number each child is at. This is how it works. Each time the child is rebellious, that is, doing anything that is willfully against the rules, they lose a point. When they have lost seven points, they lose a "privilege." Examples of lost privileges could be video games, TV, going to friends, dessert, snacks, telephone with friends, etc. Come up with a list of everything your child likes. At seven they lose one of your choice and so on. Once they exceed 10, they owe you free work (10-15 minutes per infraction.) Each day

they get one or two points (set this number ahead of time) back. If they do something special, like an unselfish act, another point may be given back. Now, some parents may protest that their child can not be expected to have just two infractions each day. Those parents, perhaps you the reader have a hard time believing that young children can go an entire day and rebel two or less times. It is because they have low expectations for their child's behavior. They have not started early dolling out consistent consequences for misbehavior. Their children hold the "Control Token" and the parents are not even aware of it. They think that it is normal for the child to disobey and break rules many times each day. The parent's expectation for the child is low and the child is well aware of it. This system sets the expectation. "You get (one to three depending on how many points you give back each morning) two times each day to disobey or break rules with no consequences." The point is that the child needs to know that the parent has the "Control Token." This system allows discipline in every location. In a public setting, the parent can whisper in the child's ear, "You just lost one. You're now at six. Remember, one more and you lose a priveledge."

### **Arguing vs. One shot reasoning**

Rules or commands can be unreasonable at times. It is best if the child does not experience too much unreasonableness in what should be the safety of their home. Arguing back and forth puts the child on an equal level as the parent. Most of the time it means they have possession of the "Control Token.". Also, the parent wants them to do or not to do a particular thing and they may, at least for the moment, be able to avoid it by arguing. They may even get to keep the "Control Token" by wearing their parent down and getting their way.

The other extreme is that the child is expected to immediately and blindly obey every command, never having a say. This can stifle a child. As adults, with bosses or even with an encounter with police, normally one can respectfully have their say.

A middle ground, an option is to allow a one-time appeal. When the command is not a time-sensitive one, there is nothing wrong with giving a child an explanation for the "why" of the rule. Doing so helps train the child to know that their parent's rules are not arbitrary but in place to train them, to protect them, along with their parents' possessions. There are all kinds of reasons. One-shot reasoning is allowing the child to respectfully protest by sharing in a few sentences or less why they do not believe they should have to do what they are being told to do. Parents are far from perfect.

The child may believe a parent's rule to be unfair or outright wrong. The child can see the parent as unfair and they can feel hurt. This can result in an ongoing negative attitude. One-shot reasoning gives an option to arguing or quietly obeying no matter what the command is. The child is allowed to respond something like this, "I don't want to because..." and state their case. "I don't want to" is not "No." It is an expression of feeling and then that feeling is followed up with reasoning. Once they have shared, you can communicate what you heard them say. It is best almost all of the time, when reasonable and age-appropriate, to state the reason that their reasoning or facts are not correct and tell them they need to comply. They got that one chance (one shot) to state their case. They are not allowed to rebut the parent's response nor to keep adding arguments at a later time. A beneficial by-product of this is that the child learns critical thinking skills and to argue with good reasoning. They learn to be authentic. They learn it because authentic valid arguments and appeals will many times result in them getting their way. During this time, the "Control Token" never passes to the child. It is an understood rule in the household that if the child presents a one-shot valid argument, the parent may change their mind.

At times, they will be right. It happens more often than one may think.

Dad: Go take a nap.

Child: I don't want to. Mom had me take a nap this morning.

Dad: OK, go have fun.

Mom: Go clean up your room now.

Child: Mom, can I finish my homework first?  
Mom: Sure, but make sure to do it right afterward.

Dad: Let's go to the store.  
Child: There's only 5 minutes left on the show I'm watching. May I finish?  
Dad: Sure, meet me at the car in 5 1/2 minutes.

### **Do not Tie Good or Bad Actions to the Child's Value.**

Some parents use words like, "Good boy!", or "Good girl!" in response to a child's actions. Whereas it may seem innocent enough, children learn that when they do good things, they are good. When they do not do good things, they believe they are bad. This is one of the reasons some adults are so defensive about being wrong. They subconsciously identify making mistakes, being wrong, to being bad and it is painful to be bad. When adults are emotionally healthy, and do not tie their behavior to their value, when they are challenged about a mistake, will see that learning from that mistake is a positive thing. They will respond something like this, "Thanks for pointing that out. My bad." When children do bad things, let them know they have done a bad thing. Never say or insinuate in any manner that they are bad, that they are flawed.

### **Parenting from Example**

Little children view their parents as "perfect," so to speak. If they believe their parents to be flawed, they have nothing to depend on and they lose hope. When the parents are abusive, for example, yelling at and hitting their children in anger, the child has two choices. They can believe their parents are wrong, and are flawed, in which case they lose hope that they will be taken care of. After all their parents are their entire life, their entire hope. Or they can believe that they must be bad enough to deserve such treatment and that their parent's actions were proper. At some point in adolescence through adulthood, people make choices. They may believe that the abusive actions of their parents were proper. After all, they turned out ok. Or they may see it as wrong. It is not uncommon for those people when they become parents to either repeat the type of parenting they experienced or reject it as abusive and do the opposite. One group will repeat the abusive behavior they experienced. The ones who do the opposite fail to see that the abusive parents most probably practiced good aspects of parenting. For example, even though they hit their children in anger, they may have been very consistent. The parent who does the opposite may parent without having any kind of consistent consequences for their children. Proper parenting is, in part, the result of reading articles like this one, talking with parents who seem to parent firmly and without anger, along with good books that teach healthy parenting skills.

### **Triangulation and Argumentation**

These are some of the most damaging things you can do to your child. Triangulation is when parents or a parent argues through or complains to their child about their spouse. Children are not capable of handling anger at all, much less a parent's anger toward their spouse. If mom complains about dad to her daughter, the daughter may grow up to have an underlying mistrust of and even hatred toward men. The inverse is true as well. However, healthy arguments between parents in front of age-appropriate children can give them examples of healthy conflict resolution. The key word here is "healthy." A healthy argument does not include anger, raised voices, blaming, interrupting, or name-calling. Each party makes their point using facts as they are believed along with opinions. Both parties consider the other's position and each validates the other's reasonable points. When the child witnesses anything other than what was just described, they learn unhealthy conflict resolution. They also lose a sense of security as they are not capable of understanding why their parents are not getting along. If you can not argue in a healthy manner, do not argue in front of your children.

For those who are separated or divorced, know that whatever you say bad about your spouse or ex-spouse can permanently damage your children. You are sacrificing them to take your anger out on your spouse. Children are perceptive. If you have an ex-spouse who has significant issues, you do not need to tell your children about them. The children will figure it out on their own in time.

## **Time, TV, and Tablets**

There are several negative aspects of children's time in front of a screen.

- Screens are entertaining and children can easily become addicted to them.
- Children fail to be as physically active which results in increased obesity and decreased physical and mental health.
- Children spend less time interacting with others.
- The content of what they view can be in opposition to the family's values.

Screens are many times used as babysitters. Screens are entertaining, very possibly more entertaining than almost anything the parents can provide. Before screens were part of our lives, or in families where children are allowed little or no screen time, children tend to seek the most exciting, entertaining thing around. Since they desire to be like their parents, they may wish to help cook, set the table, pull weeds in the yard, or whatever they see their parents doing. When those activities happen, they provide great opportunities for bonding and teaching. So, what is the solution? Allow, but limit screen time as much as possible, other than carefully chosen educational shows and apps. At a minimum set a daily time limit, whatever it is, and stick with it. Monitor what your children are seeing on their tablets and TV. You may be shocked at what they are seeing even in cartoons or what you would expect would be safe games. These are hacked at times and pornographic images can appear. It is strongly suggested that you preview any TV programs or video games before your children end up with pictures or ideas in their minds that they should never have. The health consequences of not being physically active are significant. Obesity in children has increased from [5% in the late 70's](#) to almost [20% in 2023](#). A BMI over 40 has the same impact as lifelong smoking, which is a [10-year reduction in lifespan](#). The [CDC warns](#) that Inactivity in children leads to an increase in heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and obesity. [Another study](#) found that it results in increased stress, mood swings, lack of sleep, poorer school performance, and increased risk of disease. In a nutshell, both studies and common sense indicate that children who are physically active and are not obese will have a better sense of self-worth. One has to wonder if the lack of exercise is part of the reason why [teen depression and suicide rates have increased](#).

## **Parenting Children who are Victims of Divorce**

People divorce for a multitude of reasons. Relationships between the divorced parents after divorce have many natures. Each has its benefits and drawbacks. What is in common, is that the children have and are suffering trauma as a result of the divorce. They need extra care and attention.

1. One parent has left the family altogether. The drawback of course is that the child will feel abandoned and not have the role model that would be provided. On the positive side, the abandoning parent most probably was not being a positive influence in the children's lives. John Bradshaw talking about abandonment states, "In fact to be abandoned by someone who is physically present is much more crazy-making."
2. The parents are both involved but do not speak at all to each other. This makes any agreement on how to parent the children difficult at best. It is best that they communicate in writing. The benefit is that they are not fighting. The risk is that they may speak badly about the other parent to the children.
3. The parents are both involved and communicate but have continual conflict about the children. The children are already suffering because of the divorce. Adding to their pain are conflicting parenting styles. These parents need to put the health of their children ahead of the war between each other.
4. The parents get along well.



Sadly, some parents are angry at the other parent and use their children as weapons to hurt the other parent. The section about [Triangulation](#) discusses the negative impact on the child when one parent speaks badly about the other.

At times a parent will allow the children to have fun and not be responsible so they will like that parent more than the one who requires, for example, that homework be done before fun times.

Another tactic is to allow the children to partake in activities damaging to them just to hurt the other spouse who deeply cares about their wellbeing. Yes, this happens. It could be anything from letting the children spend an inordinate amount of time looking at screens to letting them be involved with the opposite sex in harmful ways. Before giving into any kind of similar temptations, think about how your children will suffer, and how you would be using them as weapons. If you have anger toward your spouse and choose not to get over it, do not hurt your children. Consider that your anger and unforgiveness only hurts you, not your spouse. Do not allow your anger to also hurt your children.

When both parents love their children and are healthy enough to put them first, both should agree on parenting styles. Consistency between households along with consistency in consequences is the best for the child even when suffering through divorce. It gives them one more place in their lives where there is stability. If you have trouble finding agreement, consider using a mutual friend, counselor, or a wise person you can agree on to help you mediate. The well-being of your children may depend on finding a way to work out differences.

If possible, no matter what the other parent is doing, do the right thing. Be a responsible parent that does what is best for your children. By doing so, you give them the tools needed for their lives and provide them with an example of healthy parenting. If they do not appreciate it right away, at some point in their lives, they will.

### **Dating and Remarriage**

Most of the time people who go through divorce have a natural longing for a relationship with someone of the opposite sex. Before dating, before online chats and telephone calls, stop and consider your children's needs first. You have decades ahead that you can find a mate. Your children only have years with you and their needs are greater. There can be a benefit for your children: If you find a new spouse who will show love to you and your children, your children will benefit from being brought up in a family. They will be able to view a healthy relationship and have that as an example.

Drawbacks for children:

- Time and energy normally spent with them will be spent with the person you are dating and may subsequently marry.
- If some of your dates are dysfunctional, the children will view this and be confused or damaged.
- Marrying someone with different parenting styles that you are not able to find agreement about creates more confusion for your children.
- In blended households, both parents having children has risks as there are more relationships, hence more possible issues including conflicts between the children including the children believing favoritism is involved.

Solution: Put your children's needs first. Learn what mistakes you made if any in choosing your prior spouse, and in your relationship with them. Discuss parenting styles early on with your date. If there will be a blended family, have the children spend time together. Observe and ask if your children are better or worse when spending time with the other children. In summary, should you consider remarriage, you and those close to you who you respect should believe strongly that it will be an improved life for your children. Do not just trust in your own judgment as it is easy to be blinded by the desire for companionship.

## **What is Love Anyway?**

Love is a word with many meanings. We can love our spouse and love ice cream. The most misused definition of love may be best described when a boy sees a beautiful girl walking down the sidewalk and exclaims, "I love you!" He knows nothing about her, only that looking at her makes him feel good and he loves that feeling. Most people looking into the eyes of an infant have a very good feeling. Infants, toddlers, and little children are lovable much of the time. It makes us feel good to be around the innocence and life they have. Those good feelings do not result in good parenting; in what is best for the child. The love that the child needs is the love that is committed to doing what is best for that child no matter what the parent's feelings or needs are at the moment. This kind of "commitment love" is necessary for most parents of teens. Teens are just not as lovable as toddlers. Both age groups need their parents to be committed to their best.

## **Work Ethic**

Training children to have a good work ethic involves a similar process to training them to have other skills and qualities you want them to have as adults.

**Model it.** Show them that you work hard and that for the most part, you put chores ahead of play. They will see that you do a good job at what you do.

**Train Them.** Teach your children how to work. This can start with them working alongside you in the home or yard. Even two-year-olds love planting seeds and helping. They love to help, so have them help even if it slows down progress. Teach them to work with both hands. Model having fun while doing tasks.

**Expect Them to Work:** Have an expectation as early as you can that they work. They should be expected to help with age-appropriate chores. For example:

- A two-year-old can be expected to work for two minutes putting their toys in a basket.
- A four-year-old can bring the dishes to the sink.
- Young children can carry grocery bags from the car to the kitchen and help carry items to the car.
- Little children can rinse off the car while you are washing it.

Make a list and adjust it each year as the children get older. In many families of non-working teens, both mom and dad not only work, but also do most of the household chores including cooking, cleaning, laundry, and yard work. Unless the teen is busy with school, homework, and after-school activities, they should be pitching in with a good portion of these chores.

**Beyond Chores:** Each family needs to decide what are "expected chores" and what is considered "above and beyond." If it is not an "expected chore," let them choose whether to do those tasks for pay. It could be, for example, helping clean up the house, vacuuming, cleaning the car, weeding, or mowing the lawn. For "above and beyond" chores, pay an age-appropriate, task-appropriate hourly wage.

**Managing Spending:** Teach the children to separate their money into three or four categories. This process starts children off early, utilizing healthy money management. Adults would do well to follow these principles. The key to successful long-term financial management is to live on less than one makes. This results in never getting into debt, other than for a home. The four categories are:

- **Long-term Savings:** 10%-25% This is never touched.
- **Big Items:** 20%-25% Pick a dollar amount depending on their age. This category could be used for things over \$20 to start with and increase to over \$100 when they turn around 10.

- **Everyday money:** 25-60% This is what they can use to buy whatever they want,
- **Helping Others:** 10%-25% It is good to teach children early to share.

**Trading Cash for Toys and Snacks:** There must be things that they like that you do not buy for them once they start "working." A great place to take children is the Dollar Store or perhaps a thrift store, where everything is reasonably priced. If they have saved up \$4, they can buy three items at the Dollar Store. If they want something and have not chosen to work, nicely explain that they could have earned for example, \$6 working for you last week. Let them know they will have other chances to do so in the coming week. The key is to go to the store, whether they have chosen to work or not, so they can have the experience of missing out on something if they did not work. Once you have established a work ethic in them, in other words, they choose to work when they can, you no longer need to regularly take them to the store unless they ask.

**Car and Car Expense Option.** An idea that may work well for some families is to let the children know from an early age that you do not plan on paying for anything related to their car. However, you will pay them a bonus of \$3 or \$4/hour beyond their pay which will go into an account for their car. This gives them an incentive, especially as they get older, to work harder.

#### **LINKS**

[Focus on the Family](#) This may be the source of the largest support system for parents.  
[Mother's of Pre-schoolers \(MOPS\)](#)

This look at parenting has at its roots observed cause and effect, common sense, and practicality. Below is a look at what the Bible teaches about parenting.

## THE BIBLICAL

### OUTLINE

- **MOTIVATION AND FOUNDATION**
- **Children are a gift from the Lord.**
- **Parents are to have God's heart toward their children.**
- **It's the parents' job to teach their children about God and what He expects from them.**
- **Children are expected to listen to their parents.**
- **It is God's rule that children are to honor their parents.**
- **Parents are to discipline their children.**
- **Parents are to discipline their children fairly.**
- **There is something special about little children.**

#### **MOTIVATION AND FOUNDATION**

Virtually every emotional difficulty people suffer as adults has its source in their upbringing, specifically in not being loved. God is the source of love. As Christians, we are commanded to love others as He loves us. His love is a "doing" love, not a "feeling" love. He wants parents to pass on His love to their children. The Bible passages below are so clear that narrative is hardly, if at all needed.

#### **Children are a gift from the Lord.**

Children belong to God. It is because of God that parents have children. Parents must understand that children are given to them as a trust. This means that the children first belong to God, then to the parents. Since God is in control, it means that it is your job to be the best parent you can be. The result in the lives of your children, is God's work.

*He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.*  
Psalm 113:9

*Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.* Psalm 127:3-5

*My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* Psalm 139:15-16

#### **Parents are to have God's heart toward their children.**

Children are in a subordinate position to parents. They are not as smart, as strong, or as capable. This gives parents the capability, though certainly not right, to bully their children. When things are not going the way the parent desires, selfishness can result in bullying behavior. Rather parents are to be compassionate and caring, not only when the children are behaving, but when they are not.

*As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;* Psalm 103:13

*"And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a*

*large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*" Matthew 18:5-6

**It is the parents' job to teach their children about God and what He expects from them.**

These passages are clear. It is the parents' job to train their children in the ways of the Lord. You are to teach your children from the Bible. This means that you must study God's Word and get to know God, and to know what a relationship with Him looks like. Teach your children by your example and through your words. Note in Deuteronomy 6, how the challenge to parents is to "impress" God's commandments on your children.

*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.* Deuteronomy 4:9

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* Deuteronomy 6:5-9

*He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers--a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.* Psalm 78:5-7

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 2 Timothy 3:14-15

**Children are expected to listen to their parents.**

Children are to listen to their parents' instructions. This presents two challenges to parents:

1. Instruct your children about who God is and what God expects from us. Instruct through your example.
2. Expect your children to listen to you, to obey your commands. It is what God expects out of them. Your expectation should be the same, that of complete obedience. Ephesians 6 shares the result of the child's obedience. *"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.* Proverbs 1:8-9

*Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.* Proverbs 4:1-4

*Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.* Proverbs 4:10-12

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise- "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Ephesians 6:1-3*

*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Colossians 3:20*

**It is God's rule that children are to honor their parents.**

God expects both a child's attitude and their honor through obedience. Expect and teach your children to treat you with honor, not for your sake so you are honored, but for their sake that they not only obey God but also learn to honor others.

*"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12*

**Parents are to discipline their children.**

As you read and meditate on the passages below , note that it is clear that discipline is meant to be unpleasant. Do not hesitate to make your children's lives unpleasant when they are rebellious. Do not miss the point that the discipline is to be painful to the child. *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful."* You are following God's desire when you do so. It is your job to train them. The lack of applying unpleasant consequences is called "hatred." "Hatred" is a very harsh word. It is not by accident. When you put personal reasons ahead of sparing the discipline of your children, you are showing hatred toward them. Two passages in Proverbs (found below) indicate that your discipline saves them from death. Personal reasons not to discipline include, but are not limited to, wanting to be liked by your children, not liking conflict, not wanting to go through the personal difficulty associated with discipline, and simply being lazy.

*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24*

*Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death. Proverbs 19:18*

*Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. Proverbs 23:13-14*

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6*

*Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul. Proverbs 29:17*

*The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. Proverbs 29:15*

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7-11*

**Parents are to discipline their children fairly.**

Children are little people. They need to be treated with due respect. Rules should be fair, reasonable, and not be arbitrary. The rules and the consequences for not obeying them should be clear to the child ahead of time. Discipline should be administered without anger.

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4*

*Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Colossians 3:21*

**There is something special about little children.**

As you read through the following passages, meditate on how Jesus saw that there was something special about children that adults do not naturally have. Observe and learn from your children what it is that Jesus found special.

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:1-3*

*14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14*

*I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them. Mark 10:15-16*

## SUPPLEMENTS

Legend: *Italicized (Quoted)*

### Flaws and Bias in Studies About Physical Discipline

There are accepted scientific principles for experimentation and studies.

1. Change only one variable at a time. (Sciencing) If more than one variable is changed, it is unknown which one or both were responsible for a changed outcome.
2. Include all pertinent data. Failure to do so is called "Evidence Selection Bias." (Science Direct)

### Bias by Including Multiple Forms of Abuse

There has been a lot of controversy regarding the consequences of physical discipline, and many studies have been completed. A look at those studies (Reformed Perspective) will find among other things, a lack of differentiation between a swat or squeeze done without anger, and significant physical abuse done in anger. The below study published in the National Library of Medicine is an example of combining multiple forms of abuse. This is an excerpt.

*"In an early modeling study, boys in grade one who had watched a one-minute video of a boy being yelled at, shaken, and spanked with a paddle for misbehaving showed more aggression while playing with dolls than boys who had watched a one-minute video of nonviolent responses to misbehavior." (NCBI)*

This study summarizes "*Yelled at, shaken and spanked.*" as "*physically punitive.*" This violates #1 above, as the study is purported to be about a single behavior, physical discipline. This study includes anger, yelling, and shaking. As all of these are abusive on their own, none should ever be part of physical discipline. The negative impact on the boys in this study can not be attributed to the spanking alone because they may have reacted to the shaking and yelling along with the spanking. This is a similar problem in many studies.

### Bias in Summary

An excerpt of the summary (which is all that many people read) of the early modeling study, referenced above states, "*This project investigated the effect of a filmed, **physically punitive** parent model on the behavior of 60 elementary-age boys.*" (The Journal of Genetic Psychology) excluded critical additional variables (**yelling, and shaking**) and summarizes those along with spanking as "*physically punitive.*" By definition, yelling is not physically punitive. So a reader of only the summary would surmise the study proved that solely "*physically punitive*" behavior on the part of the parent resulted in increased aggression in the boys. This violates #2 above.

### Bias in Using Extremes

*"Some of these studies find that parental physical discipline is not associated with increased adolescent behavior problems when it is administered in the context of parental warmth (Deater-Deckard, Ivy, & Petrill, 2006; Roher, Borque, & Elordi, 1996; Simons, Wu, Lin, Gordon, & Conger, 2000), whereas others indicate that parental warmth does not alleviate the stress of frequent corporal punishment on youth and may even exacerbate the negative impact of physical punishment" (NCBI)*

Again, note the bias when considering the effects of warmth on the part of the parents who use physical discipline. The comparative group are families that use "*frequent corporal punishment.*" In other words, the control group rather than being a family that uses



appropriate physical discipline uses physical discipline frequently. If a family is using "frequent corporal punishment," it most probably is not effective and should not be used.

*"In a treatment study, Forgatch showed that a reduction in **harsh** discipline used by parents of boys at risk for antisocial behaviour was followed by significant reductions in their children's aggression.<sup>9</sup> These and other findings spurred researchers to identify the mechanisms linking physical punishment and child aggression." (NCBI)*

Two studies "spurred researchers" on physical discipline. One was of the boys where yelling and shaking were added to the discipline and the above study of "harsh discipline." To put it bluntly, studies that do not exclude abuse of some sort is not a study of the effects of "appropriate physical discipline" but a study of the effects of abuse.

Consider how violent professional football is. Players are allowed to have extreme physical contact without penalty. But for example, if one takes hold of a face mask, even without much force, there will be a penalty. In football, there is a differentiation between acceptable and "abusive." It is not all lumped together with "anything goes" physical contact. It is the same with parenting. There is a significant difference between moderate, controlled physical discipline and abusive physical contact. Studies that include "frequent" physical contact, or anything similar to beatings and shaking would be like a study of football without protective gear and rules to protect the players. Just like a study of football must include the rules, a study of "appropriate physical discipline" must include only families where that is all that is practiced.

*parents in more than 500 families were trained to decrease their use of physical punishment. The significant parallel decline seen in the difficult behaviors of children in the treatment group was largely explained by the parents' reduction in their use of physical punishment. (NCBI)*

Again, in this case, the reduction of the extreme, the intensity of the physical punishment resulted in decreased aggression. When moving from abuse to "appropriate physical discipline," behavior improves. This does not indicate that a moderate level of physical discipline is damaging.

### **Bias By Using the Physical Discipline of Teens**

Some studies about physical discipline include children over 12 (Virtus), better-called teens. As children get older, it takes more pain to be a deterrent to unwanted behavior. Two or three swats on the rear most probably will not have much effect. It is probable that the teens in the study are getting a beating, not a few ineffective swats. That is not what is proposed here to be "appropriate physical discipline" and it is no surprise that ongoing painful physical discipline administered to a teen would result in emotional pain. Also, as children get older, there are also more and more non-physical options available.

Sadly, the preponderance of studies seem intent on proving damage from all types of physical discipline. Even more sad, considering only how many parents yell at their children, few parents who use physical discipline do so as defined above. It is the opinion of this resource that when used as defined, for most children, it is effective in deterring both unwanted and dangerous behavior of most children without causing them emotional harm. If appropriate physical discipline does not deter your child's misbehavior, do not escalate physically. Use one of the other options discussed in this resource.

### **YELLING**

These are excerpts from articles and studies of the effects of yelling at children.

*Harsh verbal discipline can vary in severity, ranging from yelling and shouting at a child to using words to humiliate him or her. Parents normatively shift from physical to verbal*

*discipline as their children enter adolescence (Sheehan & Watson, 2008) and harsh verbal discipline is not uncommon. In a nationally representative survey (Straus & Field, 2003), approximately 90% of American parents reported one or more instances of harsh verbal discipline toward children of all ages. (NCBI) "A study published in "The Journal of Marriage and Family," says 88 percent of the families interviewed admitted shouting, yelling or screaming at their children in the previous year and that percentage jumped to 98 percent in families with seven-year-old children." (Lesliedina burg)*