PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT: DOES IT WORK?

Many parents say they use physical punishment to discipline their children. Yet, their children keep repeating the behaviors for which they were punished. We are going to discuss why physical punishment is not effective and learn better ways to gain your child’s cooperation.

My parents hit me, and I turned out okay. If it worked for me, why won’t it work for my children?

Physical punishment may temporarily stop behavior, but physical punishment does not teach children to do what you want them to do. Physical punishment can also be a dangerous way to punish children. Although not all forms of physical punishment are against the law, children can be physically harmed if parents lose control while using physical punishment to discipline their children. This can result in negative consequences for both parents and children. There are many effective forms of discipline that can gain your child’s cooperation and ensure the safety of all family members.

Is physical punishment a good form of discipline?

To discipline is to teach. Discipline should help your child learn how to control his or her own behavior. Physical punishment does not teach children how to behave the way parents want them to, as good discipline should. Discipline teaches children self-control, to be respectful of others, to express emotions appropriately, and builds self-esteem. Since parents are the most important influence in children’s lives, children learn by watching their parents. Physical punishment gives the message that hitting is an appropriate way for children to express their feelings and to solve problems.

Isn’t it easier just to use physical punishment?

Physical punishment may seem to work at first, but it is usually a temporary solution to the problem. After a while, children no longer respond to physical punishment, and parents must use more intense physical punishment to gain their children’s cooperation. It may seem easier to use physical punishment, but taking the time to teach children appropriate behaviors by using effective discipline is a more permanent solution.

Doesn’t physical punishment help parents control their child’s behavior?

Parents who use excessive punishment are not in control. Children do need to learn to listen to their parents. Children will never become self-disciplined if parents try to control their child’s behavior through physical punishment. Physical punishment does not teach how to make good decisions, how to determine what is right and wrong, and how to control behavior. Instead, physical punishment teaches children to be submissive, fearful, and/or aggressive.

Do good parents get angry?

Yes. All parents get angry at times. It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hit. Angry feelings cannot get you into trouble, but violent behavior can. It is important for parents to learn how to express and control their anger so their children learn to do the same.
What should I do when I feel like I might lose my temper?

Find a way to calm yourself. Do not do or say anything you will be sorry for later. Learn the cues that trigger your anger so that you do not lose your temper in front of your children.

If I do not use physical punishment, what can I do?

There are many other things you can do besides physically punish your children. Over the course of this treatment, you will learn nonviolent ways to solve problems. You will also learn better ways to control your anger and enjoy spending time with your child.