Is There a Better Way to Discipline?
Protecting Children and Promoting Positive Behavior

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Overview

+ **Discipline, *American style***
  + Conflict & discipline in homes
  + Corporal punishment & problems
  + Changing attitudes & behavior

+ **The Quiet Revolution: “Positive Parenting”***
  + What is it?
  + Core practices
  + Potential problems

+ **Some Trends**
My Major Credentials
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The Need for “Discipline”

“What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law... Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?”

Plato (4th Century BC)
What is “Discipline?”

Disciplina = “to instruct” or “to teach”

Contemporary definition:

“Training someone to obey the rules using punishment to correct disobedience.”
The Sounds of Parenting: Home Audio study

- 33 mothers of 2- to 5-yr-olds
- 4 to 6 evenings
- Audio-recorders on arms
- ~ 13 hours per family

(Holden, Williamson, & Holland, 2014)
Conflict in the Home

Average = every 5 minutes

Range = every 26 min. to every 2 min.!
Discipline, *American Style*

- Reasoning
- Yelling
- Remove privileges
- Time out
- Spanking/slapping

Vittrup, Holden, & Buck, 2006
Corporal Punishment

Common:
- 70% to 90%

Varies:
- Frequency
- Child age & sex
- Ethnic-racial group
- Socio-economic status
- Religious affiliation
CP in the Home
Offense: Sucking fingers

Mother & 5-yr-old daughter
Offense: Disobedience

Father & 2 yr-old son
Offense: Touching stove

Mother & 2-yr-old son
Offense: “Messing” with Pages

Mother & 4-yr-old son
Frequency of Spanking/Slapping

• In 15 of the 33 families

• Average (median) rate = every 6.3 hrs

• Most frequent = every 2.1 hrs !!!
CP & Child “Associations”

✔ Positives:
  ✔ Immediate compliance
  ✔ Nothing else....

🔴 Unintended Negative Associations:
  🔴 Aggression (& other externalizing problems)
  🔴 Depression, anxiety (& other internalizing problems)
  🔴 Risk for physical child abuse
  🔴 > 10 other problems (e.g., quality p-c relations)

🔴 Toxic for brain development?

Gershoff, 2002; Gershoff & Grogan Kaylor, in press
# How Change Attitudes & Behavior?

**#1. Awareness:**

- Informing about the research findings \( (d = .40) \)  
  (Holden, Brown, Baldwin, & Croft Caderao, 2014)

- Creating “Spank-free” zones

**#2. “Self-Persuasion”:**

- Use motivational interviewing \( (d = .97) \)  
  (Holland & Holden, in press)
“Traditional” Orientation

- Parent-centered
- Immediate compliance
- Punitive/Painful

“…. discipline sometimes confrontational or punitive, is required to socialize the child’s self-indulgent willfulness.”

(Baumrind, 1997)
An Alternative Orientation: “Positive Parenting/Discipline”

Two forms: Lite and Strong
Positive Parenting: Lite

- Warm, sensitive, responsive, involved, monitor, promote autonomy, calm, authoritative, time-outs, etc.

- Triple P-Positive Parenting program
STRONG form

- Different Orientation

- “Positive Discipline,” “Non-Violent P.,” “Attachment P.,” “Connection P.”
Definition:

... a child-rearing orientation that is centered around promoting a loving and cooperative relationship, respecting the child’s individuality, focusing on guidance not compliance, and thereby avoiding punishments.
Two Views of Child Misbehavior

**Traditional**
Misbehavior reflects:
Willfulness & challenge to authority

**Positive Parenting**
Misbehavior reflects:
- Child’s age
- Fatigue level
- Blood sugar
- Seeking attention
- Brain development
- Unrealistic expectations
- etc.
Where Did it Come From?

Plutarch (46 – 120 AD)
“children ought to be led to
honorable practices by means of
encouragement and reasoning”

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1717-1778)
“the words ‘obey’ and ‘command’ will be excluded”;
“logical consequences”
Alfred Adler (1870-1937)
- Encouragement
- Logical consequences
- Avoid rewards & punishment
- Disinvolvement from conflict

Rudolf Dreikurs (1897-1972)
Many others ...

Horace Mann
1796-1859

B. F. Skinner
1909-1990

John Bowlby
1907-1990
“Positive Parent./Disc.” Books
Core Practices

1. Encouraging
2. Using natural & logical consq.
3. Avoiding punishments (& rewards)
4. Using “time-ins”
5. Staying calm; avoid conflicts
6. Being proactive
7. Joint problem-solving
8. Guiding
9. Attending selectively
10. Using humor
Sounds of Positive Parenting

A mom reacting to a 5-yr-old girl’s behavior
Sounds of Positive Parenting

A mom talking calmly to a 5-yr-old boy
Video of Positive Parenting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmUBB71k_U8
The Evidence?

Not much!

Handful of studies:

+ *Maternal responsiveness* (Parpal & Maccoby, 1985)

+ *Mutually responsive orientation* (e.g., Kochanska, 2002)

+ *Gentle guidance* (e.g., Volling et al., 2006)

- No randomized controlled studies!

(If you have access to parents and are interested, contact me!)
Potential Problems

- It is *not* permissive parenting (problems in Sweden)
  - It may not “work” with some kids
  - Parents may not buy-in
Trends

- Violence prevention efforts
  - WHO: “Safe, stable, nurturing relationships”
  - CDC recognizing problems with CP
- Changing school discipline
  - School-wide positive discipline/collaborative problem solving/restorative discipline
- Child’s rights & new legislation
Prohibiting CP: Now 49 Nations

- Green: Prohibited in all settings
- Light Blue: Government committed to full prohibition
- Yellow: Prohibited in some settings
- Red: Not fully prohibited in any setting
Conflict pervasive in families

Discipline (CP) → potentially harmful

Positive Parenting promising—but unstudied & pitfalls

Supporting trends

A way to empower
“If we are to reach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with children, and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won’t have to struggle; but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which consciously or unconsciously the whole world is hungering.”
Thank you!

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19 States Allow Paddling in School
Let's raise children who won't have to recover from their childhood.
What Causes Conflict?

- Needs, Desires, Goals
- Needs, Desires, Goals

CONFLICT
Types of Child Behavior that Elicited CP

- Destruct
- Prud.
- Right
- Aggress
- Social Con
Key Shifts in MetaParenting

- Respect child as individual [children have rights!]
- Be cognizant of the child’s developmental level & neurological/self regulatory limits
- Promote cooperative, open communication
- Focus on long-term & joint relationship goals
- Adopt a mutual problem-solving orientation
Occurrence of the Terms in Books