

Corporal Punishment and Discipline

Corporal punishment is physical punishment intended to cause pain or discomfort. Some examples are spanking, hitting, slapping, swatting, paddling, and whipping.

It isn't banned in the United States yet, but some states have banned it in schools.

Some countries consider it an assault and have banned it in all settings.

You may have experienced corporal punishment as a child, and you may have some adverse effects, known or unknown, in your life because of it. For example, you may have greater amounts of stress than people who did not experience corporal punishment.

Research shows that corporal punishment is not an effective teaching tool.

Other negative punishments, such as yelling and shaming, are also not effective.

Instead, here is what's effective:

Discipline means "to teach." Model good behavior, such as self-regulation. Your ability to stay calm will help your child learn how to calm down (deep breathing helps). They will also feel safe with you when they aren't calm. Developmentally, children aren't born knowing how to handle all their feelings in healthy ways. It takes years to learn.

Feeling your feelings (even anger) in healthy ways and teaching your child how to do the same is helpful. This is called Emotional Intelligence.

Positive reinforcement: Notice what your child does well. Celebrate those things. Focus on what you want. What are your family values? What do you value as a parent? What does your child value? If there's a problem, use your values to guide you. Some good examples of values are safety, kindness, respect (including respect for your children), and fun.

Get professional help. If you feel tempted to hit your child or yell at them, talk to your doctor or counselor. You and your child could benefit from more support.

Google "parenting" for Internet research. Or visit: healthychildren.org (this is the parenting site from the American Academy of Pediatrics).

To find a parenting class near you (or online), ask your doctor.