

## **The Truth About Spanking**

Did your parents spank you? If they did, then you are a part of the majority. This is because spanking is a very prevalent form of punishment. But spanking is a broad term which some may substitute for abuse. However, spanking as a disciplinary action refers to a method of corporal punishment in which physical pain is used to encourage learning (“Spanking”). To some spanking is common sense; to others it is brutality. Spanking is a controversial issue because it is a very common form of punishment and may be an effective punishment for children because it has shown results, but it may also be harmful to a child’s development or even lead to abuse.

One reason spanking is controversial is because so many people do it. In fact 80% of children in America are spanked by the time they reach the fifth grade. Roughly two thirds of parents of children between the ages of 1 and 2 use spanking to discipline their kids (Gershoff). It is easy to conclude that most parents in the United States spank their children. Because it is prevalent, people could assume that if almost everyone else is doing it, then it must be okay regardless of the facts. This kind of traditionalist reasoning debilitates a logical approach to spanking and stirs debate and criticism. Spanking is often disputed because of the vast amount of people who do it.

Another reason spanking is so controversial is that some studies have shown that it is beneficial. In particular a study by Marjorie Gunnoe, spanking was commended. The study proved that children who were physically chastised would grow up happier and more successful (Fox News). It would appear that spanking does work, and anyone who advocates for spanking can cite this study as proof. Another study indicates that when spanking was made illegal in Sweden, violence among minors grew 672% (Lyons). It could be supposed that the lack of

physical punishment lead to minors becoming unruly and violent towards their peers. Data reports spanking can create “better students” and even give kids a “sunnier outlook” (Taylor). In light of these facts, spanking appears to be a fantastic method of discipline. However, in the bigger picture not all scientific studies agree. Spanking is a disputed topic because only some studies have reported its success.

Furthermore spanking is heavily debated because other studies say it is harmful physically and emotionally. Selwyn Duke writes “we often hear that corporal punishment is damaging because it teaches violence” (The New American). That claim is substantiated by evidence of spanking causing aggressive behavior among adolescents found in a study by Catherine Taylor. Her data indicated that children who were spanked more than twice a month were 50% more likely to become aggressive at the age of 5 (Time Magazine). All of this should prove that the only lesson spanking teaches is aggression. But there’s more to it than that. Researcher, Murray Straus, claimed spanking can cause anti social behavior among people who had been physically chastised as children (CNN). This study shows that spanking can leave a painful, long lasting impression on a person’s life. No doubt this is why Pediatric psychologist, Gabe Griffin, declares that the cost of spanking is far too high for it to be effective. He argues that it is too easy for a parent to physically or emotionally harm their child by spanking them (Parenting Squad). Indeed spanking may now seem like risky business, but remember, in the scientific world, both a positive and negative account of spanking’s effects exists. Spanking is controversial because various studies have condemned it as harmful.

In addition spanking is often scrutinized because it may lead to child abuse. One very public example of this can be found in the account of Hillary Adams. She published a video she had secretly captured of her father spanking her profusely. The video is very graphic and depicts

an extreme form of spanking that could be classified as child abuse. CNN journalist, Anderson Cooper showed the footage on his program Anderson Cooper 360. He also interviewed Dr. Drew Pinsky on the topic. Dr. Drew said, “We know for sure that when children feel terrorized by people who are their important caretakers, A: they lose the ability to trust, and B: it shatters the upper limits of their brain’s emotional regulatory system.” This is what happens when a child is abused by their authority figure. So when does a disciplinary spanking turn into abuse? The lines between the two are thin and blurred. Spanking is questionable because it can lead to child abuse.

To sum up, disciplinary spanking is a controversial issue because many people use it and some studies report its success, but other studies indicate that spanking is harmful and borders child abuse. In America, most people spank their kids. This action is supported by some data commending the results of spanking. On the contrary, other reports will find spanking to be harmful. Spanking is also criticized because, in extreme some cases, it leads to child abuse. In view of the facts, spanking may have benefits, but they could come at a price. So please think before you spank.

## Works Cited List

- Anderson Cooper 360. "Video: Science on spanking – Anderson Cooper 360 - CNN.com Blogs." *Anderson Cooper 360 - CNN.com Blogs*. CNN, 5 Nov. 2011. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/05/video-science-on-spanking/>>.
- CNN. "CNN - Study: Spanking kids leads to long-term bad behavior - August 14, 1997." *CNN.com - Breaking News, U.S., World, Weather, Entertainment & Video News*. N.p., 14 Aug. 1997. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9708/14/nfm.spanking/>>.
- Fox News. "Study: Spanked Children May Grow Up to Be Happier, More Successful | Fox News." *Fox News - Breaking News Updates | Latest News Headlines | Photos & News Videos*. N.p., 4 Jan. 2010. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,581882,00.html>>.
- Gershoff, E. T. (2008). *Report on Physical Punishment in the United States: What Research Tells Us About Its Effects on Children*. Columbus, OH: Center for Effective Discipline.
- Lyons, John S., and Robert E. Larzelere. "To Spank or Not To Spank?." *Fish Eaters: The Whys and Hows of Traditional Catholicism*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://fisheaters.com/spanking.html>>
- Parenting Squad. "Is Spanking Good For Kids? | Parenting Squad." *Parenting Squad | Tips, hacks, and news for parents and their families.* N.p., 18 Feb. 2010. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://parentingsquad.com/is-spanking-good-for-kids>>.
- "Spanking." *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*. 2003. *Encyclopedia.com*. 8 Dec. 2011 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3406900414.html>>.

Taylor, Joel. "Spanking Gets A Good Report Card « 5 Pt. Salt." *5 Pt. Salt*. N.p., 5 Feb. 2010.

Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://5ptsalt.com/2010/02/05/spanking-gets-a-good-report-card/>>.

The New American. "New Study Finds Spanking Is Good for Kids." *The New American*. N.p.,

6 Jan. 2010. Web. 5 Dec. 2011. <<http://thenewamerican.com/culture/family/2701-new-study-finds-spanking-is-good-for-kids>>.

Time Magazine. "The Long-Term Effects of Spanking - TIME." *Breaking News, Analysis,*

*Politics, Blogs, News Photos, Video, Tech Reviews - TIME.com*. N.p., 3 May 2010. Web.

5 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1983895,00.html>>.