

Dear Parents,

Did you know that –



- Spanking **shrinks brains.**

Harvard Medical School found that kids who are spanked just once a month had **14-19% smaller brains in the decision-making area.**¹ These were children who remembered being spanked at least 12 times a year and once with a belt, paddle or brush, but were not injured or spanked in anger.

- 1,574 studies found that **spanking is harmful.**

- Even ‘everyday spanking’ is **consistently associated with:**

- **More** aggression
- **More** negative relationships with parents
- **Lower** cognitive ability
- **Substance** abuse
- **More** fighting
- **Weaker** moral values
- **Delinquent** behavior
- **More** mental health problems
- **Lower** self-esteem
- **More** antisocial behavior
- **Lower** self-control²

- Spanking **lowers IQ.**

The University of New Hampshire found that American children who are spanked at ages 2-4 have **5 less IQ points** than non-spanked children, even years later. Children spanked at ages 5-9 have **2.8 less IQ points.**³

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does this mean that everyone who was spanked as a child has problems?** No, it means that spanking doesn’t help children learn what we want them to learn. Every time we spank a child, we raise the risk that the child will develop problems.
- **Why is this so?** Spanking focuses on the behavior and misses the underlying need. It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but the child hasn’t learned how to do things differently. And it can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and prevent some children from telling about sexual abuse for fear of further punishment.
- **But I was spanked and turned out okay?** Today, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about how children learn and develop. We know other ways of teaching children that don’t have these risks and harms.

Prepared, designed, and disseminated by:

Endorsed by:



1. Tomoda, A., Suzuki, H., Rabi, K., Sheu, Y., Polcari, A., & Teicher, M.H. (2010). Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment. *Neuroimage*, 47(Suppl. 2), T66–T71.

2. Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453–469. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>

3. Straus, M. & Paschall, M.J. Corporal punishment by mothers and development of children’s cognitive ability: A longitudinal study of two nationally representative age cohorts. (2009). *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(5): 459. doi:10.1080/10926770903035168





Tips for Parents of Infants (0-12 months)

CRYING AND FUSSING

Babies cry and fuss for a variety of reasons – hunger, sleepiness, need for a diaper change. Sometimes for no apparent reason at all. They need to be held and cuddled and to hear your gentle voice to help them feel safe and secure.

TRY ...

- Checking to see if baby's **diaper** needs to be changed, offering a bottle or breast to **feed** them, or just picking them up, **cuddling** and talking sweetly to them.
- Wearing baby in a sling or carrier, taking a walk outside or car ride.
- Giving baby a pacifier.
- Singing, humming, and cooing, as well as moving (gentle **rocking, swinging, walking**), which often calms baby down.

PUTTING EVERYTHING INTO MOUTH

Child is learning hand-mouth coordination or is teething and needs safe objects to chew on.

TRY ...

- Putting a **damp washcloth into freezer** for baby to chew on.
- **Child-proofing** by removing small, chokeable objects from reach.

WON'T STOP CRYING NO MATTER WHAT YOU TRY

TRY ...

- Turning on children's music with singing or ocean/water sounds.
- Placing baby safely in a crib **without** any blankets or pillows.
- Getting a glass of water, walking around, singing to yourself, making long exhales slowly – this helps your nervous system stay calm
- Taking turns being with the baby with your partner or family member.
- Driving in the car with baby in a secure car seat.

WON'T SLEEP THROUGH THE NIGHT

Babies double their birth weight by 4-6 months and triple their weight by 1 year, so they have to eat frequently. Some babies may start sleeping through the night around 4 months. Many do not.

TRY ...

- Sleeping when the baby sleeps.
- Taking turns with your partner or family member feeding your baby.
- Leaving the room to take a short break – take deep breaths.
- Feeding and soothing baby.

THROWING THINGS ON THE GROUND

It is very common and normal for an older infant to throw things on the ground every 2.5 seconds on purpose. This is how your child learns about gravity and cause and effect. Children enjoy the sound falling objects make.

TRY ...

- Distracting baby – stop the drop game by using safe tethers or rings that can't wrap around a child's neck.

REMEMBER

- Babies don't spoil when held. Denying a baby food, touch, or attention is harmful to their development.
- Shaking, hitting, or tossing a baby is harmful.
- Understand the harms of spanking and sign the pledge today.



Tips for Parents of Young Toddlers

(12-24 months)

DANGER – (TOUCHING STOVE/ELECTRICITY/ RUNNING INTO STREET/LEAVING WITHOUT AN ADULT)

Toddlers are very curious and learn by touching and exploring. Toddlers are too young to understand danger. Baby-proof home by keeping valuables and dangers such as cords, toys with small parts, medicines, cleaning supplies away from the toddler. Identify a safe location in your house where toddler can safely explore.

WHINING

Toddlers whine for a variety of reasons. Whining is an attempt to self soothe. A toddler may be bored, hungry or tired or may just want to connect with you.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

“I can’t understand you when you talk like this

“Don’t make me give you something to cry about.”

- “I would like to hear you. Come, sit next to me.”
- Try distraction: “Look at this, we have [object, snack]!” OR
- “You would like for me to listen, and you sound very frustrated.”

SAYING “NO” WHEN YOU ASK THEM TO DO SOMETHING

It is normal for toddlers to say “no” a lot, even if child means “yes”. It is still important to have rules and set limits.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

“Clean up this mess right now!”

“Don’t disobey me!”

- “Let’s see how fast you can put all the [toys] away!” OR Let’s clean this mess up together!
- “Let’s put all the [toys] away so we can [watch a movie].” I can tell you are feeling impatient. We’ve been waiting a long time.

TEMPER TANTRUMS

Toddlers often have temper tantrums when they are hungry or tired. Sometimes they have tantrums out of frustration when they cannot use words to say what they want. Your child needs your help to calm down and to feel heard.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

“Stop crying right now!”

“You are so bad!”

“I really hate when you act like this.”

- “I know it’s hard to leave [the playground] when you’re having fun.” Or, I know you really want that [toy]. Let play with it later” OR Let’s try again. Take a deep breath.
- “I see that you are really mad because [...]” OR I hear how really angry you are.
- “Let’s go over here where it’s quieter.” OR
- “Those words and actions don’t help us find a solution. Would you be willing to...”

Sometimes the best option is to just quietly and calmly stay with your child as your child is not hurting herself or anyone else.

BEING AGGRESSIVE

Toddlers commonly bite, hit and grab things from others. Praise good behavior.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

“You are so mean, don’t hit!”

“You are a bad boy/girl!”

- “When you [hit, bite] your [brother], it hurts him and he feels sad.” Saying, “It’s OK to be angry, but I won’t let you hit. We need to keep everyone safe.” OR
- “You had something important you wanted to say.”
- “Let’s find something else to play with.”
- “It’s your [sister]’s turn with the [train]. Or, “I will help you wait until it’s your turn.”

GETS INTO THINGS

A toddler learns by exploring and touching. Prevention is best. Place temptations out of sight and reach. Child-proof using cabinet latches or use distractions.



Tips for Parents of Older Toddlers

(24-36 months)

LEARNING TO USE THE BATHROOM

Potty accidents are normal. Children slowly learn what it feels like when they have to pee or poop. Children are often 3 years old or older before they can use the bathroom by themselves. Many children will have accidents even after they have been using the bathroom awhile.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Saying, "You are so lazy!"

Making your child sit on the potty or toilet against their will

Punishing your child for accidents

- "Let's try to use the potty next time."
- Establishing comfort while sitting on the potty/toilet – read books. Avoid having a child sit on a toilet for more than 5 minutes.
- Expressing excitement when your child is able to use the toilet. When accidents happen, it just means your child's body isn't mature enough yet to consistently use the toilet.

NIGHTTIME WETTING

Nighttime wetting may occur until children are much older. Stressful events can cause nighttime wetting even after a child has been successful.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Punishing or shaming your child for wetting the bed or making a big deal out of it

- "Oopsy, you had an accident. Let's change your pajamas and sheets and get back to bed."

WON'T SIT STILL

Young children have a lot of energy. It is normal for a young child to have a hard time sitting in one spot for more than a few minutes. Allowing children to move helps them feel good.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Sit still!"

"If you get out of that chair, you will be punished."

- "Come here and sit by Mommy"
- "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [I Spy or any other game]."

WON'T GO TO BED

A consistent early bedtime routine every day and a safe sleeping space are keys to a happy bedtime and minimize tantrums and meltdowns.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Go to bed right now!"

"If you get out of bed, you will be punished."

- "I'm happy to help you get in bed. Let's read a book."
- Setting up a routine of reading a book before sleep. Reading out loud to a child can help them relax.

WON'T STAY IN BED

A young child needs help to feel safe and secure. Sometimes your child may still want to be near you after bedtime. When they come to you, they are expressing a need.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Scolding your child or locking child in room

- Helping your child feel comfortable in the bedroom by turning on a night light, remaining in the room for a short time to offer comfort, reading a story, or rubbing their forehead or feet.

BEING AGGRESSIVE

Toddlers commonly bite, hit and grab things from others. Praise good behavior.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

"You are so mean, don't hit!"

"You are a bad boy/girl!"

- "When you [hit, bite] your [brother], it hurts him and he feels sad." Saying, "It's OK to be angry, but I won't let you hit. We need to keep everyone safe." OR
- "You had something important you wanted to say."
- "Let's find something else to play with."
- "It's your [sister]'s turn with the [train]. Or, "I will help you wait until it's your turn."



Tips for Parents of Preschoolers

(3-5 years)

DELAYED POTTY TRAINING

It is not uncommon for children to still rely on diapers at night until age 7. It's common for previously potty trained children to have accidents during times of stress or change (moving, new sibling, etc.).

INSTEAD OF ...	TRY...
<p>Forcing your child to sit on the toilet against their will</p> <p>Punishing your child or showing disappointment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (Gently): "I notice you are holding yourself [or pacing back and forth]. Try sitting on the potty." ▪ If your child soils themselves, say, "It happens. It will happen less over time."

EXAGGERATING THE TRUTH

This is normal in preschoolers because of their active imaginations. Pretending and imagining are important to a child's development.

INSTEAD OF ...	TRY...
<p>Calling your child a liar</p> <p>Punishing your child for lying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I wonder if you are afraid to tell me what happened." ▪ "I wonder if you really don't want to..." The more children are punished, the more likely they are to lie. Avoid using punishment. Talk about better solutions to their problem than using lying.

TALKING CONSTANTLY AND ASKING "WHY?" FREQUENTLY

A child's curiosity about the world helps to build concepts, vocabulary, and understanding.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
<p>Labeling them as nosy and/or telling them to be quiet, hush, or shut up</p> <p>Brushing your child off and not answering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking your child, "What do you think?" This turns the "why" question around so your child has a chance to think and come up with their own answer. ▪ "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [! You might need to let your child know that you need quiet for a little while to help you feel calm.

HAVING MANY FEARS (THE DARK, GOING TO BED, MONSTERS, ANIMALS)

INSTEAD OF SAYING...	TRY...
<p>"Don't be a baby."</p> <p>"Don't be afraid." or "You better stay in your bed or the monsters will get you."</p> <p>"Big boys and girls aren't scared."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "It's OK to have fears. Let's figure this out together." ▪ Mirroring your child's feelings: "You feel afraid. Maybe a nightlight would feel better." Give your child a flashlight or monster spray to help them confront or overcome fears. ▪ "It's hard to be scared. Tell me what scares you." or "I can see that you are afraid. I can see this bothers you. I can see being in the dark frightens you. Can I turn on a nightlight?"

BEING CURIOUS ABOUT PRIVATE PARTS AND ASKING QUESTIONS

INSTEAD OF ...	TRY...
<p>Shaming the child for touching their private parts</p> <p>Using slang terms (e.g., cookie, bird, pocketbook)</p> <p>Making your child hug and kiss when they don't want to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching your child it's OK to touch their own private parts when they are alone. ▪ Teaching your child about all body parts including penis, vagina, butt, breasts. ▪ Teaching them to offer a fistbump or handshake.

WON'T GO TO BED

A consistent early bedtime routine every day and a safe sleeping space are keys to a happy bedtime.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...	TRY...
<p>"Go to bed now!"</p> <p>"If you get out of bed, you will be punished."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Do you want to walk or tiptoe to bed?" ▪ Make going to bed an enjoyable experience. Learn what helps your child go to sleep. Consider their sensory needs. Do they like dark and quiet, or do they prefer light and sounds of the ocean? Do they need a heavy blanket? ▪ "Let's read a book." ▪ "It's 8 o'clock and you are in bed already, well done!" Provide a consistent and enjoyable routine every night.



Tips for Parents of School Age Children (5-9 years)

FIGHTING WITH SIBLINGS

Child is learning about power and empathy.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY...

“Stop fighting right now!”

“Let me give you both a good spanking/whooping so you stop fighting all the time.”

“No TV for a month!”

- “If we play together without fighting, we get to do more fun stuff.”
- “Let me set the timer so you and your [brother] can take turns.”
- “Your [sister] is younger than you and doesn’t understand how taking turns works yet. Can you show her/him?”
- “Let’s wait. I’ll hold the remote while we figure out what we want to watch.”

BAD GRADES

Some children learn easily, and some need your help to get their grades up. Make sure your child is getting enough sleep in order to learn. 9-11 hours is ideal for ages 6-13. Help child learn good habits by having daily routines around homework and studying.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY...

“You are so stupid.”

“You are not good at [reading] at all.”

“This is so easy – why are you so bad at this?”

- “You just haven’t learned [multiplication] YET, but if we work on it together, you will get better.”
- “I notice the grade for this class is low. What is difficult about this class? How can I help?”
- “Do you have a friend we could ask to help you with this?”

MISBEHAVING AT SCHOOL

Listen to your child’s problems. Try to understand the need underneath the behavior.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY...

“You are stupid for getting into trouble!”

“You are heading straight for jail!”

“Let me give you a whooping so you can remember to behave next time.”

- “Your teacher called me about something that happened at school. I want to help. Tell me what happened.”
- “If you could make school any way you wanted, how would it be?”
- “When you behave this way [whatever the behavior might be], what do you need?”

BEING AGGRESSIVE – HITTING, GRABBING THINGS FROM OTHERS

Instead of calling out child for assertive behavior, try helping them to stand up for themselves without aggression.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

“You are so mean – stop hitting!”

“You are a bad boy/girl!”

“Don’t hit!”

- “When you [hit, bite] your [brother], it hurts him, and he feels sad.”
- “Let’s find something else to play with.”
- “It’s OK to be angry, but I won’t let you hit. We need to keep everyone safe.”
- “It’s your [sister]’s turn with the [train]. I will help you wait until it’s your turn.”

CONNECTING WITH PRE-TEENS

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

“You finally listened to me.”

“Why can’t you ever do what I tell you to do?”

- “I notice that you were so kind.”
- “I notice you feel really good today.”
- “Your jokes make me laugh.”
- “You bring me joy.”
- “I had such a good time with you today.”
- “It really feels good when you listen to me.”
- “Thank you for listening.”
- “I can see you are really engaged, and it’s hard for you hear me.”
- “I noticed you weren’t able to do... How can I help you?”



Tips for Parents of Tweens/Teens (10-18 years)

SEXTING - Teens need your help to navigate the possibility of receiving or sending a nude photo. Ask if they know the potential consequences to assure that your teen understands that possessing nude photos of anyone underage is illegal, that photos can go viral, can be used as blackmail, and can hurt people. Read an article on sexting and discuss it together.

SEXUAL ACTS, TALK OR TEXT - Hormones rage at puberty. Help your children make educated decisions. Talk about your values and expectations instead of reacting after discovery. Instead of shaming a child for sexual interest, listen to them about what they believe is appropriate and respectful behavior and what is not. Share with them your point of view.

RUNNING AWAY - An unsafe home environment is the most common reason for running away. Provide your child with a safe and supportive environment with open communication.

INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

Threatening to not let them come back home.

“Do you want me to help you pack?”

“You are grounded for the rest of your life”

Locking them in their room

- “Tell me why you felt you had to run away.”
- I understand that you felt you needed to run away. I felt rejected and unappreciated. Can you help me understand what was bothering you?
- “What can I do to make you feel safe at home?”
- It scared me that you ran away. Let’s talk about how we can make living at home feel better.
- “I was scared when I didn’t know where to find you.
- “I want you to be happy here. Can you tell me why you ran away?” Listen to why they ran away. Understand that this was a solution to their problem. Discuss better solutions.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY – ALCOHOL, DRUGS - Peer pressure plays a big role in substance use. Help your child understand the effects of drug and alcohol use. Set a positive example around substance use at home.

INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

“You are heading straight for jail!”

“You are grounded!”

- “Underage drinking is a serious crime and we both can get into trouble because I’m responsible for your behavior.”
- “Being charged with a DUI is a crime that will stay on your record. It can prevent you from getting into college you want to go to or getting your dream job down the line.” Or, “Drinking numbs your reflexes and you won’t be able to make decisions as fast and clear. That puts you and others in danger.”

- **Help your child rehearse what to he/she would like to say to his/her peers:** “I’ll get in trouble with my parents if I smoke.”
- **Make a pact with your child:** “I want you to be safe. If you want to leave a situation, all you have to do is text or call me and I will pick you up from anywhere at any time without asking questions.”
- **Have a “code” text message** for when your child needs your help to get out of a peer pressure situation. Decide together what they want you to do or say when they text you the code message.

TALKING BACK, BREAKING HOUSE RULES

Have a family meeting and collaborate with your teenager on house rules. Remember, complicated decision-making parts of the brain are not fully developed. Teenagers need help solving problems and making good decisions.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ... TRY...

“What were you thinking?”

“You are going to be punished if you are late again.”

“Don’t talk to me that way!”

- “Let’s talk about what happened and what might work better in the future.”
- “Help me understand why you were late tonight.” “If you want to go out on Friday nights, you need to be back on time.”
- “I worry when you aren’t home at the time we agreed upon. What makes it difficult to make it home on time?”
- “When you talk to me that way, it’s hard for me to listen. I want to hear you. If you lower your volume, I can listen better

PHONE USE - Work together to set some rules around phone use and decide together on consequences when those rules are broken.

INSTEAD OF ... TRY...

Threatening a child with phone removal

Saying, “You will lose your phone if you use it during the night.”

- Calmly remind them of your agreement.
- “We agreed that phone hours are from 7:30am till 7:30pm on school nights, and 9pm on weekends.” Are you having a hard time following through? Listen to why they are struggling with the agreement.

INAPPROPRIATE DRESS - Your child is learning about his/her sexuality and needs your guidance support on how their clothing may influence others. Don’t shame or humiliate. Accept that this will be an ongoing conversation.

INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

“You look ridiculous when you wear that.”

“Are you really wearing that?”

- “Dressing in a way that shows you deserve respect is important to me and people respecting you is important to me. I’m uncomfortable with what you are wearing.” Listen to why they selected this clothing.
- Respectfully, state your concern about what they are wearing. “I notice that this outfit makes you look much older than you are. I’m uncomfortable with that.” “Tell me what you like about this outfit.”