

Smacking

"Smacking is the only thing that works... I get so angry with him sometimes. Besides, I was smacked when I was a child and it never did me any harm."

- Smacking does not teach children self-discipline
- Smacking gives attention to a child's bad behaviour
- Children learn best by attention to things they do well
- There are many positive alternatives to smacking
- Smacking teaches children to hurt others
- When self-discipline is taught, smacking becomes unnecessary

The great debate

It is important that children learn how to behave and control their own behaviour as they get older. Parents have a very important job as a role model for their children in helping them to learn how to do this.

Teaching children from a young age by setting limits and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instill self-discipline. Smacking, which controls your child from the outside, has no long-lasting positive effect. In fact smacking usually has to increase in severity in order to have the same impact on your growing child. This is where the thin line between smacking and hitting can be crossed.

Have you ever smacked your child? The answer from many parents reading this will be yes. Every parent experiences frustration with his or her child at various times. It is at these times that a parent may smack in the heat of the moment, but this is an outlet for the parent's frustration, rather than a helpful way of influencing the child's behaviour.

However, simply because lots of people may have smacked their children does not mean it is the best way to punish your child or ensure good behaviour. Those who say smacking is acceptable have argued that it is not harmful in the long term and is the most immediate form of discipline. It is much more helpful and safer to notice and reward your child's positive behaviours, to encourage the behaviours you want.

The numbers of parents who smack their children is decreasing and lots of those who continue often do so because they are not sure that other methods will work.

In this society parents are not allowed to physically harm their children regardless of any individual, cultural or religious justification. As a result, child protection professionals will assess incidents of physical ill treatment of children, in order that they can understand, prevent and explain the consequences of further incidents.

WARNING SIGNS

A child who flinches when they fear they will be hit. Smacking a child in frustration with a force, which in hindsight was unnecessary. Leaving bruising and other marks on a child.

ACTION

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's smacking get support from the organisations listed under Contacts (see right). If it is someone you know, offer practical help and suggestions about alternatives.

WHAT TO SAY

Tell your child they have crossed boundaries or broken family rules. Use your tone of voice and facial expressions to help them understand. Explain your reasons why.

PREVENTION

Make it a general rule not to smack your child. Use other ways to discipline; set clear limits and explain them, be firm and consistent, ignore trivial bad behaviour and reward good (perhaps use a star chart).

CONTACTS

- Talk to your Health Visitor
- Ask Wiltshire
08457 585 072
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
- Local Sure Start
01225 751261
- Family Support
Wiltshire Social Services
Kennet & Salisbury
01722 333552
North Wiltshire
01249 460222
West Wiltshire
01225 752198
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 222
- Wiltshire County Council
Children's Services:
Main Switchboard
01225 713000
Area Offices:
North Wiltshire
01249 444321
West Wiltshire
01225 773500
South Wiltshire
01722 327551
Emergency Duty Service
(out of hours)
0845 60 70 888

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk*