



To Spank or Not To Spank **Steve Martinez, LCSW, LSOTP**

Spanking a child, is it wrong or is it right? That question has long been debated by parents and experts alike. Legally it is ok to spank a child, but is it morally correct? The basic argument for and against spanking is very simple. Some people say that spanking is the only way to get a child to behave. The parenting experts even agree by stating that spanking will lead to an immediate change in behaviors. Plus, many of us were spanked as children, so it is what we learned. The other side of the argument is that spanking can be one of the worst things that a parent can do to a child. The parenting experts state that spanking causes deep emotional scars. It can lead to a negative parenting/child relationship, and it can lead to aggressive children. Who is right?

This is where the argument can get emotional. Those who believe in spanking will claim that children who are not spanked are “spoiled brats”, and that their parents do not know how to control their children. While the other side will claim that spankers are abusers and that their children will grow up damaged and violent.

I was spanked as a child, and I turned out ok. My parents were not abusing me nor do I hate my parents, but trust me, I am still scared of them. No matter how old I get, I bet they will still spank me. Though I was spanked, I do not spank my children. There have been days that I have wanted to, but I never have. While my twin boys were growing up, I always figured that I would spank them once they turned five years old. Well, they are now five and I still haven't spanked them. I remember trying to get them into my car and they both ran off chasing each other in a parking lot. I was irate and by the time I got them into the car I was ready to start spanking. I was telling them how dangerous that was and that they could have gotten hurt. Then it dawned on me, I was going to hurt them because they could have gotten hurt. That didn't make sense to me.

Since that day, I have not come close to spanking my children. There are days that I am frustrated and angry and that helps me understand that spanking them will only make the situation worse. I will then have one or two crying children and I will only get more frustrated and angry. Plus I pride myself in being a teacher for my boys. If I want them to learn from me, I don't want them to learn how to be angry or to solve problems with violence. If you really think about it, in society it is not acceptable to hit anyone for doing something wrong. I make many mistakes at work; Archbishop Gomez doesn't come around and hit me because of them. No one hits me for my mistakes, so I am not going to hit my children for their mistakes.

So instead of spanking I give my boys timeouts. No, it doesn't always work and no it isn't easy. They get five minute timeouts, a minute for their age. The timeout doesn't begin until they are seated and quiet, and it will not end until they do all five minutes quietly. When things are really rough, they are sent to their rooms. They hate that one. There are still days that I want to spank them but I think I will keep with the timeouts.

I am no parenting expert; I'm learning every day. There are days where I still don't know what I am doing, but I feel I am doing the right thing when it comes to the discipline. I am not going to say that spanking is evil, nor if you are a spanker are you the devil. As a parent, you should do what you feel is comfortable, what you feel is right. All I would ask you to do is to just calm down before you spank your child and remember what you are teaching your child.