No Hitting! – Full Book

No Hitting!

A Short Guide on Why Spanking is Unnecessary

by Skyler J. Collins, Published 2015

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Preface

Here it is, my third published work and second written entirely by myself. *Everything Voluntary: From Politics to Parenting* was an anthology I edited and self-published in May of 2012(1), as a primer to the philosophy of voluntaryism. *Toward a Free Society: A Short Guide on Building a Culture of Liberty* I wrote between December 2014 and January 2015 as a series of columns at Everything-Voluntary.com and published soon thereafter in booklet form(2). The present work likewise began life as a series of columns at Everything-Voluntary.com.

My hope with this booklet is to change your family life for the better. I want you to have the best relationship with your children as you possibly can. Like me, you may have had them for this reason: to enrich your life now and later. I am firmly opposed to the idea that punitive- or violence-based parenting is compatible with these goals. This booklet begins the exploration on why, but to really get the most it has to offer, pay attention to the footnotes and Further Reading at the end. If I had to recommend two books to give you the tools necessary to raise your children right, those would be *Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon(3) and *Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids* by Laura Markham.(4)

I would like to thank my friend Chris Brown for introducing me to *Unconditional Parenting* by Alfie Kohn, who likewise has my sincerest gratitude. And were it not for my loving wife, Julieta, I would not have the amazing children that I do, nor would I have had the support I needed to change from a violent and punitive father toward someone my children deserve.

(1) Available in several formats at https://skyler.link/evcbook1

(2) Available in several formats at https://skyler.link/evcbook2

(3) Available in several formats at http://skyler.link/amznpet

(4) Available in several formats at http://skyler.link/amznpphk

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The practice of spanking children in particular, and child punishment in general, was abandoned in my family in August of 2011.(5) We've never looked back. Sure my children have had their difficult moments, but I've managed to find better ways to help them through than with spanking or time-outs. In every case, I found and dealt with the unmet

need that caused the problem, or failing that, got them through their trouble with empathy, compassion, and humor. I am now completely unconvinced that spanking, or any punishment of children, is ever necessary. So I thought I'd write this booklet examining the reasons people give for these archaic practices, with emphasis on the worst form of child punishment, spanking.

Reasons for Spanking

Many are the reasons caretakers give for spanking their children. They were likely spanked themselves and believe they "turned out just fine," so they've decided to continue the practice. Their parenting tool box contains just a few tools for dealing with conflicts between them and their children; the spanking tool sits conveniently at the top. Aside from conflicts, many reasons concern the belief that children need to be spanked. Here are the reasons that I'll address in this booklet:

- To prevent a child from misbehaving, by teaching consequences.
- To keep a child from hurting themselves; to keep a child from hurting others.
- To discipline a child to become a proper adult; to toughen up a child to live in a cruel world.
- To teach a child respect, and obedience toward authority.
- To raise a child the way God says we should.

Unmet Needs

The best approaches I've discovered to raising children are founded on the idea that children have needs, and in their attempt to meet them, they make mistakes. Put another way, every act of so-called "misbehavior" is in reality a failed attempt by the child to meet his own needs.(6) The unmet need is sometimes obvious (he's antsy and needs to move), but often not (he's angry because of the actions of someone or something unrelated to the current situation; he's hungry; he's tired). If we as caretakers shift our focus from "discipline" to determining and meeting our children's needs, the idea that spanking is unnecessary becomes obvious.

As I hope to show throughout this booklet, children don't need to be spanked. Ever. What they need is our empathy, compassion, focus, and willingness to dig as deep as necessary to determine what needs of theirs we're failing to meet that's causing them to behave in undesirable ways. And sometimes we just need to reexamine our own expectations of how children of any age should behave.(7) They're often doing exactly as they should considering their unmet needs and their maturity.

(5) Read "Post-Punitive Parenting" by the author at http://skyler.link/sjcpostpunitive

(6) Read "Children Don't Really Misbehave" by Thomas Gordon at http://skyler.link/ncptgmisbehave

(7) Read “Ten Ways We Misunderstand Children” by Jan Hunt at http://skyler.link/ncp10ways

Chapter 2 – Preventing Misbehavior

Many caretakers justify their use of spanking and punishments as a way to prevent what they perceive as misbehavior. They believe that children won’t learn to behave properly if their misbehavior is not met with undesirable consequences. Children dislike being hit, so it’s believed that children will cease behaving improperly in order to avoid getting hit. Let’s put aside any empirical evidence on the effectiveness of spanking for this reason, and instead focus on why it’s unnecessary.

Needs-based Behavior

I don’t believe that anyone, children included, does anything out of sheer randomness. Rather, human action is purposeful, which purpose is ultimately the meeting of our need to alleviate our felt uneasiness about the state of things around us. This is the great insight discovered by economist Ludwig von Mises in the early 20th Century. He wrote, “The incentive that impels a man to act is always some uneasiness.” And he proved it with, “A man perfectly content with the state of his affairs would have no incentive to change things.”(8) Therefore, Acting Man, or Acting Child, is behaving in such a way as to remove his felt uneasiness. His actions may or may not meet this need, but because he has faith that they will, he acts.(9)

Misbehavior

Unfortunately for the child his actions are sometimes viewed unfavorably by his caretaker and labelled as “misbehavior”. Is that because they are inherently unfavorable? If they are the wrong actions to meet the child’s needs, then I suppose we could say that, but that’s from the child’s perspective. From the caretaker’s, the characteristic of “unfavorable” or “bad” is purely a subjective determination; the behavior bothers the caretaker (and possibly others) in some way. Why it bothers the caretaker is the caretaker’s prerogative. Should the child be punished for the opinion of the caretaker? If the child’s behavior is damaging towards himself or others (or their property), the caretaker has every right to intervene, but what is the point of the caretaker reacting violently or punitively to the child in error?

Spanking Mistreats the Symptom

The only point that I can see is that the parent has yet to work out his own problems, likely having a cause in childhood, and erroneously employs the wrong means to alleviate his own feeling of uneasiness.(10) However, spanking the child for his misbehavior is treating the symptom, and a mistreatment at that. Why is the child misbehaving? I can think of only three reasons: 1) the child is not actually misbehaving, he’s just behaving in a way that annoys his caretaker, 2) the child has faith in the wrong means to achieve his desired ends,

and 3) some need of the child's that can only be provided by his caretaker has gone unmet, leading to confusion and anger.

Will spanking properly treat any of these causes for misbehavior? Let's see. On 1), spanking is an irrational reaction by the caretaker that will only cause pain and resentment. Rather than spanking, perhaps the caretaker could re-evaluate what he finds annoying, and try to view the situation in a new light. And/or, he could ask the child for a moment, seek to understand why the child is doing what he's doing, and negotiate a way to help him meet his need without annoying his caretaker.(11) On 2) likewise, spanking will cause pain and resentment, and it doesn't do anything to teach the child proper means to achieve his desired ends. Instead of spanking, the caretaker could once again seek understanding and negotiate with the child a better way to meet his needs. On 3), spanking ignores the unmet needs, and creates new ones. Clearly, the caretaker could figure out, by himself or in league with other caretakers, where he's failed to meet his child's needs (and they are not few), and then attempt to make things right. It's even a possibility that the child can help the caretaker figure out where things went wrong.(12)

As can be seen, spanking is unnecessary as a tool to prevent misbehavior. We're all trying the best we can to meet our need to remove felt uneasiness about the state of things around us. Children are no different, other than their lack of knowledge and wisdom. They will no doubt "misbehave" as a matter of trying to figure things out for themselves. Responding with violence is totally unnecessary and *quite* counterproductive when you understand the causes – and their cures – for so-called misbehavior.

(8) See the Mises Wiki entry for "Uneasiness" at http://skyler.link/misesuneasiness

(9) Read "Action, Faith, and Voluntaryism" by the author at http://skyler.link/evcactionfaith

(10) Read "Five Reasons Not to Have Children" by Daniel Mackler, particularly the first and third reasons, at http://skyler.link/wtn5reasons

(11) Read "Why Negotiate with Children?" by the author at http://skyler.link/evcnegotiate

(12) Read Chapter 3, "Active Listening: The Language of Acceptance" of *Parent Effectiveness Training*, by Thomas Gordon at http://skyler.link/petactivelistening

Chapter 3 – Hurting Themselves or Others

It might seem logical to cause a child pain in order to teach him what pain feels like, so that he'll refrain from hurting himself or others. Unfortunately, when a caretaker intentionally hurts his child, he's doing far more than teaching him what pain feels like, as well as ignoring the alternatives to teaching him to be safe and to keep his hands to himself. I'll explore both scenarios to see why spanking is unnecessary.

Hurting Themselves

Touching a hot stove, sticking a fork in an electrical socket, running into the street, these

are just three of the countless ways our children can unintentionally hurt themselves. What's going on here when children do this? They're being curious. They don't know or haven't experienced something, and they want to. What better way to satisfy their curiosity than through approach and touch? Their ignorance of the full scope of potential consequences to their curiosity can get them into some real trouble. What should we caretakers do? Should we immediately intervene and give them a spanking and a scolding, "Don't do that!"? That might work, at least to the point of making them think twice before engaging in that particular bout of curiosity (diminishing the instinct in the process). But since there're a thousand plus ways for children to hurt themselves, will spanking protect them from every way?

I don't think so. Besides the costs of spanking, which I'll get to below, spanking, as I showed in the last chapter, does nothing to address the needs of the child, nor prepare him for the future. The desire to touch a hot stove is an attempt to meet a child's need to know what's going on up there, what his caretaker is up to. Rather than spanking, it's been my experience that lifting the child up to see what's going on and telling him about the danger in touching the stove – and even showing the child by touching it myself and making "Ouch!" sounds – has been sufficiently effective. Same goes for electrical outlets and running into the street. Simply explain or show the danger to the child, and just as importantly, follow that up with a request to seek your help when they want to see what's going on, to figure out something, or to cross the street. And of course, until they've learned to be careful through your consistent and respectful guidance, little children probably shouldn't be left alone in the face of certain types of dangers. Although, I think some dangers are quite okay to experience first-hand. "Experience is a great teacher," as John Legend put it.

Hurting Others

Children can hurt others either by accident or on purpose. Accidents can be dealt with on the same basis as when children accidentally hurt themselves (see above), but what about when one child intentionally hurts another child? Should the child be spanked (hit) to learn that hitting others is wrong? That's a contradictory message. On the one hand one, it teaches the child that if he hurts someone else, he will be hurt himself. And on the other hand, it teaches the child that hitting is not always wrong, that is, hitting is okay when you are bigger and are trying to teach someone smaller not to hit. Ultimately, it teaches that the strong may use violence over the weak.

The more important question, however, is why does one child feel it necessary to hit another child? What compels him to employ such violent means? He clearly feels uneasy about the state of things around him, and desires to change them. Maybe the other child has an interesting toy. Or maybe the other child initiated the violence. In either case, the child is limited in his knowledge of the appropriate means to achieve his desired ends.

Spanking the child fails to address this. What the child needs is the guidance to meet his needs properly. I covered several alternatives in the last chapter, but more, he might need some help understanding the effects his violence has on others. Describe for him how the other child is feeling now that he's been made to feel pain, and ask the child about why he felt it necessary to use violence to get what he wants. Explore the situation with him in a compassionate and respectful way, probably at a time after the stress-induced cortisol levels in his brain have receded. Besides the contradictory message, there are other costs to a caretaker inflicting pain on his child.

Inflicting Pain

In my opinion, there are serious costs to the relationship between people when the bigger and stronger party claims the right to inflict pain on the smaller and weaker one. How many adult relationships would last under this arrangement? How many kid relationships would last? It makes me wonder how many caretaker/child relationships would last under this arrangement if this right to inflict pain didn't also include the right to force the association or the fact of dependency by the child on the caretaker. Such a relationship is already quite unequal, with all power residing on one side. The only recourse the child has is feeling something intense toward his treatment. Resentment and anger destroys relationships because it destroys the trust and love that relationships depend on. It also incentivizes the child to disassociate as often as possible and cover up behavior that would earn him a spanking.

Does a child who's hurt another child "deserve" to be hurt? Maybe; maybe not. But is that the wisest course of action if the goal is to raise a child who learns to respect and have compassion for others? Children who aren't given respect and compassion when they need it the most, during these times of weakness and ignorance, never learn the value and importance of respect and compassion. The intentional infliction of pain from caretaker to child is not only unnecessary, but counter-productive if the desire is to live in a world filled with respectful and compassionate people.

Pain is a natural part of life. It doesn't need to be arbitrarily created to experience. When children are in danger of hurting themselves, it's because they lack knowledge and wisdom. Such ignorance also leads to children using violence to get what they want. The remedy to ignorance is not spanking, or any other kind of punishment. Rather, the remedy is respectful and compassionate guidance by a trusted caretaker, and the resultant life experience.

Chapter 4 – Discipline and Toughness

It is said that we live in a cruel and heartless world. To send our children out into that cruel world as innocent, fluffy bunnies would be like pulling the trigger of the gun pressed against their temples ourselves. How many people sincerely believe this? That without

“discipline” to teach them safe behavior and the requisite “toughness” to defend themselves, they’ll fall prey to the legions of predators that won’t hesitate to pounce on them the moment they cross the threshold. How does any caretaker ever let their child out of their sight? And even more baffling, how are there any children anywhere? What a pessimistic, nay, cynical view of the world, completely unsupported by the facts.(13) Do children need spanking- or punishment-based discipline? Do they need their caretaker to toughen them up through violence? Let’s see.

Discipline

“Discipline” is poorly used, and has been for a while. From the Latin *disciplina*, it originally meant, “instruction given, teaching, learning, knowledge.” *To guide*, in other words. At what point did it take on a violent connotation? Probably when it started being used in a military context. To be made to use the extreme amounts of violence found in war, one must be disciplined quite harshly. When defending violent parenting practices today, people say things like “But kids *need* discipline, or else [something bad happens].” A clever euphemism to hide the fact that what is being claimed is that children need to be hit, to be the recipients of violence and made to feel pain by someone far more powerful than they. But do they?

If we’re raising soldiers, people to follow our commands of death and destruction, then we likely do need to utilize harsh violence-based discipline in order to mold them into unrepentant killers. But I’m not raising killers, and I doubt you are either. Rather, I’m raising people who I hope will think and act for themselves. I, too, believe in discipline, but as it was originally used: to guide. How effective is violence at guiding children to think and act for themselves? Violence teaches that one is master of the other, and may use violence to control how the other thinks and acts. Criminals and lawmakers know this. That’s why they employ it. If our goal as caretakers is raising children to think and act for themselves, then they must be disciplined – guided – in nonviolent and noncoercive ways. Such starts with compassion(14) and respect(15), and continues with love(16), example(17), negotiation(18), and active listening.

Toughness

Honestly, I wonder what people mean when they say that kids need to learn to be tough. Do they mean that they need to be able to take an insult? Or to take a hit? Or to take a beating? This worldview that kids should be toughened up through parental aggression if they are to survive “in the real world” seems more a symptom of past abuse than of an accurate portrayal of reality. Cruelty, I think, is learned. When certain children are abused, they grow callous and resentful, and look for healing through abusing others, because it makes them feel powerful and in control.(19) Bullies are made, not born, and when they become caretakers, they perpetuate the cycle of abuse, unless they learn and commit to a

better way.

If the world is, in general, cruel and heartless, then it's because caretakers keep raising and releasing cruel and heartless people into the world. I agree with L. R. Knost who wrote, "It's not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It's our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless."(20) It is my position that spanking and punishment does indeed "toughen up" our children, but it does so at considerable costs, as I've gone over in previous chapters. But I wonder, is there another way to toughen our children to stand up to bullies without sacrificing our relationship with them or their psychological development?

I think so. Much of what I wrote in my booklet, *Toward a Free Society*, presents an alternative to building toughness.(21) As was my thesis, if liberty is to be maintained, its violation must produce feelings of moral outrage in people. Moral outrage (disgust and anger) is a result of their socialization, enculturation, and education. When people are socialized and enculturated to expect liberty, they are much more likely to fight to preserve it. Likewise for peace. If we raise our children in peace, with respect, then when someone comes along – a bully – bent on treating them differently, they'll recognize him for what he is and the accompanying moral outrage will provide the confidence and strength to stand up to him. Rather than being tough as a result of being abused, they are tough as a result of being treated with respect. That seems like an acceptable alternative to me.

I don't think the world is always cruel and heartless. There are many good and wonderful things about it; my wife and children, for starters. I value discipline and toughness, but I see no reason to consider spanking as a necessary practice to produce them. Many have been disciplined and toughened up as a result of being raised by respectful, loving, and compassionate caretakers. I strive every day for my children to be counted among them.

(13) See "Crime Statistics" at FreeRangeKids.com at http://skyler.link/frkcrimestats

(14) Read "Raising Children Compassionately" by Marshall Rosenberg at http://skyler.link/evccompassion

(15) Read "Whence Cometh Respect?" by the author at http://skyler.link/evcrespect

(16) Read "Love Cups and Love Languages" by the author at http://skyler.link/evclovecups

(17) Read "Teaching Children Respect" by Pam Leo at http://skyler.link/ncprespect

(18) Read Chapter 11, "The 'No-Lose' Method for Resolving Conflicts" of *Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon at http://skyler.link/petnolose

(19) Read "Natural Born Bullies" by Robin Grille at http://skyler.link/evcbullies

(20) Read *Two Thousand Kisses a Day: Gentle Parenting through the Ages and Stages* by L. R. Knost, available in several formats at http://skyler.link/amzn2000kisses

(21) Available in several formats at http://skyler.link/evcbook2

Chapter 5 – Respect and Obedience

Raise your hand if you want respectful and obedient children. What a magical place it

would be if our children were to obey our every command and never show even a hint of disrespect toward us! On second thought, while perfectly respectful and obedient little robots would be nice, I'm not sure I want my children as such happy slaves (an oxymoron if there ever was one). Rather, I think their respect and obedience would mean more to me if I knew each was a genuine, thoughtful show of love as their caretaker and confidant. Will spanking and punishments get me there? I don't believe so.

Respect

Respect is both a noun and a verb, but their meanings are similar: to treat with, or to have, "deferential regard or esteem", about sums it up. What does that mean in practice? To have a feeling of respect toward something, one regards them, or it, with "kindly feelings which springs from consideration of estimable qualities." Estimable (admirable) is like beauty or worth, it's subjective, a determination made in the minds of those considering said qualities.

Origins of Respect

If respect is the result of kindly feelings, which are a result of considering certain qualities as estimable, which is a subjective determination, then it follows that respect, too, is also subjective. What is considered respectful behavior, like what is considered beautiful art, differs from person to person. As people are social animals, there is likely general agreement on what constitutes respectfulness in a given society, though like people, not every society will consider the same behaviors as respectful or disrespectful.

As respect is felt, people will behave respectfully toward other people if they not only understand what that person considers respectful, but desire to treat that person respectfully. The first is primed through a general knowledge of what constitutes respectfulness in a given society, as mentioned, but the second must be preceded by the act of bonding.

Bonding

Treating someone respectfully, like all purposeful behavior, is a means to an end (which end may also be a means to an end, of course). Which end? Likely, at least, the maintenance of a valued relationship. How do relationships become valued? Through bonding. When people bond, they get to know one another on a personal level. They learn about each other's needs, wants, and aspirations. They learn about interests they share in common. They become friends and feelings of mutual-admiration and -regard develop. And they become more familiar with each other's qualities, like temperament or intelligence. Each person then assigns worth to those qualities and determines for themselves whether or not the other deserves their respect (to be treated with respectfulness). As importantly, the bonding also serves as a way to communicate, verbally or not, what respect means to

each person so that the other has more knowledge with which to work from.

Children

Now, if respect is earned through bonding, then those who've bonded with a person will most likely receive their respect. This seems to start in infancy. As baby suckles mother's breast, their eyes lock, and through both touch and sight, they bond.(22) Thus begins respect. As baby grows and begins to learn more about the world around him, he, hopefully, bonds with others besides his mother. As bonds are built, what the child understands as respectful behavior is developed. Though he's still immature and will likely behave disrespectfully toward others, so long as he's regarded properly as a growing child(23) and treated with respect by others, he will eventually come around to being more mindful of how respectful his behavior is perceived by those he cares about, and soon the rest of society.

So, do children need spanking and punishments to learn respect? Hardly. Genuine respect isn't earned through the use of violence. Instead of earning respect, such practices earn fear and resentment.(24) In my experience, children who are perpetually disrespected in these ways never learn self-respect and have a much harder time developing bonds with others, certainly with their own caretakers (as well as developing other problems(25)). As shown above, bonding, not spanking, is the path a caretaker must take to earn the respect of their children.

Obedience

Spanking and punishment sure can create a culture of obedience within a caretaker-child relationship. But why do such children obey? Is it because they have genuine love and respect for their caretaker, believing such feelings are reciprocated, and desire to make their caretaker happy by being helpful? Or is it because they fear a spanking? Most likely, the latter. Now, you might want obedience on such terms with your children, but I don't. Why not? Because fear-based obedience will only persist so long as children have reason to fear you. As dependent little minions, their survival is a matter of keeping their caretaker satisfied. Once they're not so little and dependent, their incentive to obey withers away, and will eventually disappear. The balance of power is no longer so lopsided. What then? They go out into the world and want never to return.

That doesn't have to be the case. You can raise children who want to obey you out of love instead of fear, and will want to do so for the rest of your life. It begins with respect, as I went over in length above. When people respect and love each other, they naturally want to be helpful. I probably wouldn't label such helpfulness as "obedience", but the result is the same. When the caretaker makes a reasonable request in a respectful way, his loving child will respond. And to solidify such a culture of respect and helpfulness, the caretaker

should likewise respond to the requests of his child. Spanking and punishments are unnecessary.

Seriously though, perfectly obedient robots would be quite nice, but that's not the role I desire for my children, whom I love and want to see grow up as self-respecting, confident, loving, thoughtful people. I want to earn their love, respect, and helpfulness, which can't be done through the use of fear and violence. And just as importantly, I want to always show them love, respect, and helpfulness.

(22) Read "Bonding with Your Newborn" by William Sears at http://skyler.link/apbonding

(23) Read "Ten Ways We Misunderstand Children" by Jan Hunt at http://skyler.link/ncp10ways

(24) Read "Why Do We Hurt Our Children?" by James Kimmell at http://skyler.link/evcwhyhurtchildren

(25) Browse the "Research and Informed Expert Opinion" resource page of Project NoSpank at http://skyler.link/nospankresearch

Chapter 6 – Divine Mandate

Many religious people, Christian and not, consider the practice of spanking to be divinely mandated. They'll quote scriptures or religious leaders in the attempt to support that belief. If you believe without a doubt that spanking is required by your god, then you likely won't care what I have to say. That's fine; feel free to skip to the end. For everyone else, perhaps we can shed some perspective on things.

Perspective

In December 2000, Lisa Haddock wrote of her responses from several religious leaders in the New Jersey area to the question, "According to your religious tradition, under what circumstances can a parent strike a child? How far can a parent go when correcting a child's behavior?" She received the following (abbreviated) responses:(26)

Rev. Steven R. McClelland, pastor, First Presbyterian Church,

> *"He who spares his rod hates his son" was never meant as an endorsement of corporal punishment. The rod mentioned in Proverbs is the same rod mentioned in Psalm 23, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." This rod was the round end of a shepherd's staff used to keep a sheep from wandering off in the wrong direction and getting hurt. It is analogous to a concrete divider on a highway separating the right and left lanes in order to prevent collisions. In this day and age there is no theological or psychological need to use corporal*

> *punishment. When parents hit children, they show that they have lost control of their tempers. As a result, their children are filled with fear.*

He goes on to recommend time-outs instead of spanking, but it is my position that even time-outs are as unnecessary and counter-productive as spanking.(27) His interpretation of the rod is shared by Samuel Martin who wrote an entire book examining the original meaning of these passages from the Bible, titled *Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me*.(28)

The Rev. Kobutsu Malone, Buddhist priest, Engaged Zen Foundation,

> *I can only speak from the perspective of a simple Buddhist priest. Working over the years with my own children, students, prisoners, and my fellow human beings, I have learned that any form of punishment, be it corporal or psychological, is counterproductive. It is uncivilized and serves no purpose other than to perpetuate oppression.*
>
> *The practice of punishment involves the deliberate infliction of physical or emotional pain by one person who has power over the other. It instills fear, creates trauma, and damages the punished as well as the punisher. The net result is humiliation and degradation for the giver and the receiver.*
>
> *Each time we are punished, we are taught that punishment is acceptable. Out of fear, we modify our behavior in the presence of our oppressor. When our punisher is no longer present, we feel resentment. In time, these feelings can turn into hatred for ourselves and others and lead to depression and alienation. When these feelings are directed outwardly, we oppress others. We come to believe: "I was punished; therefore it is justifiable for me to punish another." We, in effect, have learned to become the oppressor. We pass on the cycle of violence to our families, our children, and our society.*
>
> *Inflicting pain after a child has misbehaved does not change the*

> *original event nor does it educate the individual. Communication, education, restraint, and discipline are the only effective means for parents to direct and guide their children. Punishment, corporal or otherwise, is unacceptable and inexcusable, because it destroys any possibility for real healing and learning.*

He mirrors my own thinking as presented throughout this booklet. Spanking and punishments ignore root causes and are ineffective at educating children on the proper means to meet their desired ends, their needs.

Rakesh Chhabra, M.D., Hindu Samaj,

> *The Hindu religion is based on the concept of kindness and non-violence (ahimsa). Ahimsa means not causing harm to any living being through words, deeds, or thoughts.*
>
> *Corporal punishment is violence, and it is not sanctioned by Hindu tradition or scriptures. Spanking teaches children that violence is acceptable. It will make them violent with their peers, siblings, and their own children. It also makes them more stubborn and aggressive. They may tell lies or manipulate others to get away from the punishment. It may also decrease their self-esteem.*
>
> *Instead of corporal punishment, the Hindu religion recommends using words, explanation, and personal example to motivate and change the behavior of children. Children are considered to be a form of God, according to Hindu tradition, and should be treated with love and respect.*

I really love this. I am quite unfamiliar with Hindu religion, but this makes it sound quite compatible with both my parenting and political philosophies.(29)

Mohammad Moutaz Charaf, Dar-Ul-Islah Mosque,

> *Islam recognizes that each child differs in disposition, level of*

> *understanding, and cleverness. So in Islam, we can teach children by a variety of means, such as talking, reasoning, explaining, relating stories, setting good examples, being consistent in expectations, offering encouragement and rewards, and sometimes by distancing ourselves from them.*

He goes on to recommend a light spanking, not while angry, in order to protect the child from a dangerous situation. I believe I adequately addressed that concern in Chapter 3. The rest of the responses do encourage spanking as a matter of divine mandate, not as a matter of wisdom or effectiveness in meeting all the needs of the child.

Divine Mandate

If you truly believe that the practice of spanking or the punishment of children in general is a commandment from the divine, then you must weigh that against everything I've written in this booklet so far. Why would such a practice be required if it is ineffective and counter-productive in raising loving and compassionate children? Perhaps it's just a test of faith, although it seems unfair that our children, our children's children, and so on, should be the ones to suffer for the beliefs of caretakers.

How about, for those who believe spanking is a divine mandate, you relate with your children in such a way so as to prevent even the need to follow this mandate? Meet their every psychological and biological need as a preventive measure. We as caretakers, religious or not, should be committed to doing this anyway. Surely a god wouldn't require we spank our children for nothing, right? And when our children make mistakes, as immature and ignorant beings are wont to do, they'll trust us to help them make things right and learn a better way.

As mentioned at the beginning of this booklet, the practice of spanking and other forms of punishment was abandoned in my family in 2011. My oldest, a son, was five years old, and had been spanked since he was three. A friend and mentor of mine at the time introduced me to Alfie Kohn's *Unconditional Parenting*.(30) Reading it caused major doubts in me that my parenting methods were ideal or compatible with my values.(31)
My wife and I decided to stop spanking and punishing our son, and instead find a better way to address the issues that prompted punishment. We found them throughout many books and all over the Internet.(32) While we still have a lot to learn about the best way to raise our kids, we're confident that the tools of violence and fear are completely unnecessary and counterproductive to raising healthy, loving, and compassionate humans.

I hope that this booklet is enlightening and causes you to likewise abandon the unnecessary and counterproductive practice of spanking. Godspeed!

(26) Read “Should Parents Spare the Rod When Punishing Kids?” by Lisa Haddock at http://skyler.link/jrspankingreligion

(27) Read “The Case Against Time-out” by Peter Haiman at http://skyler.link/ncptimeout

(28) Read “Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me” by Samuel Martin at http://skyler.link/thyrodthystaff

(29) Read “The Philosophy of Voluntaryism” by the author at http://skyler.link/evcphilosophy

(30) Available in several formats at http://skyler.link/amznunconditional

(31) Read “The Values of a Voluntaryist” by the author at http://skyler.link/evcvalues

(32) See the Resource page at Everything-Voluntary.com at http://skyler.link/evcresources, and the Gentle Guidance article archive at The Natural Child Project at http://skyler.link/ncpguidance

Further Reading

Connection Parenting, Pam Leo
Free Range Kids, Lenore Skenazy
Nonviolent Communication, Marshall Rosenberg
Parenting a Free Child, Rue Kream
Parenting Effectiveness Training, Thomas Gordon
Parenting for a Peaceful World, Robin Grille
Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids, Laura Markham
Peaceful Parent, Happy Siblings, Laura Markham
Playful Parenting, Lawrence Cohen
Siblings without Rivalry, A. Faber & E. Mazlish
The 5 Love Languages of Children, Gary Chapman
The Gentle Parent, L. R. Knost
Two Thousand Kisses a Day, L. R. Knost
Unconditional Parenting, by Alfie Kohn

About the Author

Skyler J. Collins lives with his beautiful wife and three wonderful children in Salt Lake City, Utah. He’s a voluntaryist and radical unschooler. He enjoys reading, writing, and podcasting about anything on liberty, economics, philosophy, religion, science, health, and childhood development. He and his wife are committed to raising their children in peace and love, exploring the world with them, and showing them how to deal with others respectfully, and enjoy their freedom responsibly. He is the founder of Everything-Voluntary.com. His websites also include skylerjcollins.com, LibertySearch.info, and LargePrintLiberty.com.