

# They're Catching On



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*"Balancing on My Toes" is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), and her partner Daddy G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found here. BMT-only RSS feed available here.*

Its working! There was a news article this week at CNN that describes in a scientific, no nonsense way about how spanking children decreases their ability to control themselves because it decreases the amount of grey matter, a type of brain tissue, that forms which helps them self-regulate. In my opinion there are many things wrong with spanking a child and the first and foremost is because it is damaging to their healthy development. There are many countries around the world that have laws that protect children from this kind of harm but in America there seems to be almost a blindness to the problem.

## **"And that's what's wrong with kids these days..."**

Have you heard this one? I have heard this followed by some of the most ridiculous statements. There is nothing wrong with teaching real respect instead of fear. There is nothing wrong with teaching a child a little empathy and compassion. These are the traits that take a child into adulthood prepared for their life ahead. Teaching a child to fear punitive punishment damages their ability and desire to self-regulate. This puts in them a sense of outside control, therefore they can actually believe that they act because of outside forces, not because they desired to perform or react in a certain way. An example of this would be blaming a sibling for having to walk over gravel when they were the one that chose to not put their shoes on when they went to go fetch them. This self-control is exactly the thing that is so valuable for mature adult life, and spanking and shaming really do contribute to an imbalance in this development.

## **"But I was spanked and I'm just fine..."**

Okay, I'm pulling out the old hat example of how these things are passed along, but there needs to be an end to the cycle. Moms raise children who have children. Parents are trusted and advice is asked. This is fine and great for small things: diaper changes, and

pajama choices, but there needs to be clear instruction on how to parent without the use of violence and threats to control. The reason there needs to be clear guidelines and help in place for instruction and support is because so many of us adults are taught that children are annoying bothers to be dealt with. I say we change that old way of thinking and start really giving our children the start in life they deserve.

**Because after all, spanking and shaming are a form of bullying and no one likes a bully...**

Parents that spank teach their children through behavior modeling that it's okay to hit others and shame them in front of their peers. Embarrassment can have severe lasting effects just like spanking, but can be made public which can give other bullies ammunition for tearing others down. Spanking is about anger and loss of control. If a parent were taught to regulate their own emotions then the children watching them would too.

### **Final Thoughts**

There is a lot of science that says spanking and other punitive punishment is harmful to children. Unfortunately there is a large gap between what is known and what is practiced. There is a great battle to be fought if we are going to protect all children. Until then it is our job to continue to spread knowledge and model understanding and gentle parenting to those that need the role model and instruction.

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