

I Do Not Want a “Well Behaved” Child

This morning I got a new comment on one of my spanking articles. It was another person coming in to defend their right to hit their child. I shortened it, but it partly read:

“Whoever wrote this and did the research is confused and did not define terms accurately. I spanked, not hit, all nine of my children and they do not hit. Never have. My grown children are well adjusted, well behaved, loving kids. I receive positive compliments about them often. Spanking is quite misunderstood.”

Nevermind the fact that this person is trying to make a case for spanking not being hitting. For more of my thoughts on that you can check out [\[this blog\]](#) I wrote a while back.

What I wanted to address here is something in this comment I see often when it comes to pro-spankers justifying their actions, and that is that their child is *“well behaved.”*

As soon as I see this term tossed around, I quickly remember that this person and I are not even operating on the same parenting paradigm. Our entire foundation and basis at which we view the lens of raising humans is in complete (or nearly complete) opposition to one another.

The reason for that is because **I do not want a “well behaved” child.** It is not, nor will it ever be, a goal of mine as a parent.

First, let’s take a look at some definitions of “well behaved.”

“behaving in a way that is accepted as correct.”

And to that I say, who defines what is a “correct” way to be?

**Sentence: “child or animal behaves in a way that is polite or gentle and does not upset people.”*

First of all, why are only the most vulnerable among us expected to be “well behaved” (children and animals)?

Second, I am not raising my son to be a people-pleaser. If he has anything to say that has value, he will likely upset some people. As a matter of fact, at not even three-years-old, he is already triggering to some adults for having strong preferences and opinions and having the freedom to voice them.

"If you describe someone, especially a child, as well-behaved, you mean that they behave in a way that adults generally like and think is correct."

Well I am not sure we can get any more overt with the true meaning of a well behaved child. According to this definition, it essentially means we are grooming children to act in a way that we (adults) approve of and is convenient for us, regardless of how it feels to them. So we are teaching our children to operate under authoritarian values and seek validation from others. Great.

Some synonyms for "well behaved" are: obedient, disciplined, peaceable, docile, controlled, restrained, cooperative, compliant, and law-abiding.

Just reading these words make me cringe.

To the person (and any others who might agree) who wrote me this message:

Yes, go ahead and spank your child...

if what you are wanting is a docile child...

if your objective as a parent is to control your child...

if your goal is to raise an obedient child who doesn't question your actions or the actions of others...

if you want your child to look outside of themselves for validation...

if you think the sign of good parenting is having a "well behaved" child...

You can have a well behaved child. I don't want one.

I want a child who stands up for himself when he knows someone is hurting him. That includes standing up to me.

I want a child who questions the status quo and systems that harm and don't make sense to him. That includes questioning me.

I want a child who fully expresses his full range of emotions without fear of being shamed, ridiculed, or hit.

I want a kind, loving, compassionate, respectful child. I get that by modeling to him a kind, loving (unconditionally), compassionate, and respectful parent. Modeling that means that I don't hit him (or spank, since you think there is a difference). It means that I understand that children learn what they live, and living in fear isn't an option for us. As a parent, I do my best to respond to him in the way I would like to see him respond to others. That is

modeling. That is how they learn, and it does not include hurting people.

I am not saying that your children are not loving, kind, etc. But I do not believe they were unaffected by your actions. Not everyone who smokes will develop lung cancer, either, but I would still not advocate for the smoking of cigarettes, as there are much better, healthier, and effective ways to cope with stress, just like there are much better, healthier, and way less damaging ways to raise a human.