

For Review Only

Almost all children can be unreasonably demanding and difficult at times. And a child's excessive demands can wear out even the most patient of parents.

Parenting our children in today's society is very different from parenting in our parents' time. The old rules may not necessarily work with the new youth.

What should you do? Spare the rod and risk spoiling the child?
Or spank, punish and impose your will? How do you
tread the fine line between discipline and abuse?

Living with Discipline Issues offers sensible advice on handling temper tantrums, ways to handle children who lie or steal as well as effective discipline strategies you can use at home.

Revised and updated, *Living with Discipline Issues* is part of a series of handbooks on mental health in children written by mental health professionals from the Child Guidance Clinic. Other titles in the series are:

- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - Anger
 - Autism
- Divorce and Family Issues
 - Grief
- Intelligence and Learning Difficulties
 - Self-harm Behaviours
 - Sexuality Issues
 - Stress

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DR PARVATHY PATHY, FIONA TAN, SHYON LOO

Living with DISCIPLINE ISSUES

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FIONA TAN, SHYON LOO



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**DISCIPLINE
ISSUES**

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DR PARVATHY PATHY,
FIONA TAN, SHYON LOO



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© 2015 Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited

Illustrations by Julie Davey
Series designer: Bernard Go

First published 2003 by Times Editions

This 2015 edition published by
Marshall Cavendish Editions
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International
1 New Industrial Road, Singapore 536196

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Marshall Cavendish Corporation. 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown NY 10591-9001, USA • Marshall Cavendish International (Thailand) Co Ltd. 253 Asoke, 12th Flr, Sukhumvit 21 Road, Klongtoey Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand • Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Times Subang, Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park, Batu Tiga, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Pathy, Parvathy, author.

Living with discipline issues / Dr Parvathy Pathy, Fiona Tan, Shyon Loo; illustrations, Julie Davey. – Second edition. – Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2015.
pages cm – (Living with)

“First published 2003 by Times Editions.”

ISBN: 978-981-4634-18-2 (paperback)

1. Discipline of children. 2. Child rearing. I. Title. II. Tan, Fiona, 1983-author. III. Loo, Shyon, author. IV. Davey, Julie, illustrator. V. Series: Living with.

HQ770.4

649.64 — dc23

OCN 913323933

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

**Dedicated to
all the children of the Child Guidance Clinic
and their parents**

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PREFACE

The topic of discipline brings to my mind a popular Tamil proverb that says, “If you cannot bend it at five, can you bend it at 50?” The proverb succinctly highlights the importance and necessity of disciplining a child when he is young and flexible so as to ensure a good outcome. It implies that it is harder to train the child the older he gets, and it becomes a nearly impossible task in adulthood.

Parenting is one of the most important and difficult tasks that adults perform in the course of their lives. One of the vital cornerstones of parenting is effective discipline. Parenting well means balancing unconditional love for the child with firm but loving discipline when the need arises. It is often trying for parents to work out a balance between these two apparently contradictory behaviours.

Individuals often learn how to be effective parents by reflecting on their own parents’ approaches, researching about different parenting strategies, and attending parenting classes or discussing “tried and tested” strategies with friends. Effective parenting will lead to well-adjusted individuals; while poor parenting may result in challenging behavior across an individual’s lifespan. Thus, it is important to take the task of parenting seriously, just as we take much time, thought and effort to prepare for our future careers.

I believe most of us will have a fair amount of success carrying out our parenting task. At other times, however, we will fumble and make mistakes as we try to parent our children. What is most important is that we learn and acquire knowledge about good parenting skills and put in our best effort. In the course of parenting our children, we have to discipline them even if it makes us feel uncomfortable. So, it makes good sense for parents to learn how to perform this important task effectively. The process of parenting our children is not that difficult, once we get the hang of it.

Dr Parvathy Pathy

July 2015

INTRODUCTION

With modernisation and progress, parenting has become increasingly challenging and demanding. In order to be better equipped than our parents, we have to make an effort to find out more about parenting through books and attending parenting seminars, and talking to friends or other parents who have had some measure of experience and success in their parenting.

A common topic that stirs the interest of many parents worldwide is how to discipline their children effectively.

This book, which has a mainly Asian context, hopes to give you some ideas and strategies to effectively discipline your child or teenager. It tries to take into account Asian cultural practices and values, and hopes to give an overview of what discipline is and how parents or caregivers can effectively but lovingly discipline children under their care.

It also gives specific tips on how to handle specific behavioural problems that are commonly of concern to Asian parents, as well as other concerned parents worldwide.

A chapter is devoted to the topic of child abuse as it is important that parents know what it is, so that they do not inadvertently abuse their children in the course of disciplining them.

Besides parents, other adults involved in the care and upbringing of children will benefit from reading this book. For convenience, the child is generally referred to as “he” in the book.

Happy reading and parenting!

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WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

PART 1

The word “discipline” comes from the root word “disciplinare” which means “to teach or instruct”. It refers to a systematic method of teaching and nurturing our children to become competent individuals with self-control and self-direction, as well as concern and care for others.

1.1 WHO SHOULD DISCIPLINE THE CHILD?

The home and family is where a child receives his first training on how he should conduct himself successfully and correctly in society. It is where he learns appropriate social rules, values and behaviours. A child’s parents play a vital role in guiding him on the right path, so it is essentially their duty and responsibility to discipline their child. By disciplining a child appropriately and showering him with a healthy dose of unconditional love, the child’s parents help to lay a strong foundation for him to become a socially, spiritually and morally successful member of society.

1.2 WHEN SHOULD DISCIPLINE START?

Discipline has to begin when the child is young and more flexible in his ways. The child’s parents or main caregivers should be his first disciplinarians. Other institutions such as the child’s school, the state and society play a role at a later stage.

In some cases, when negative habits and traits have been formed and become firmly established, they become harder to break and the school’s or state’s corrective intervention can be rather painful and not as effective. This is the case with many recalcitrant, hard-core juvenile delinquents and adult criminals who frequently get into trouble with the law.

Therefore, all parents have to take their parenting responsibility seriously and learn how to exercise effective discipline when they bring up their children.

1.3 HOW DO YOU DISCIPLINE A CHILD EFFECTIVELY?

To exercise effective discipline at home, parents must know the theories and practices underlying effective discipline techniques that work on children. They must understand that effective discipline does not refer to a regimented, loveless style of punitive measures that parents employ to make their children fear and obey them.

Effective discipline combines parental firmness and consistency with parental understanding, compassion and unconditional love. Unconditional love is accepting and loving the child for who he is, and not for what he has or has

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not done. Unconditional parental love also means not hesitating to correct or discipline the child when he is veering off the right path.

1.4 WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

Effective discipline has five important features:

- An environment where there is a positive and supportive parent-child relationship.
- An environment where there is security, safety, stability and the setting of appropriate and reasonable rules in the home.
- A strategy for systematic teaching and strengthening of desired behaviours.
- A strategy for reducing or eliminating undesired or unwanted behaviours.
- Consistency is the key to effective discipline. Inconsistent discipline often makes children feel confused, uncertain and insecure. It is also easier for children to follow rules if their parents and caregivers stick to the reasonable rules that have been set previously. Consistent parents do not give in to the child's pressure to change the reasonable rules or consequences that have previously been set.

In order for discipline to be effective, all of these components must be present.

1.5 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD UP A GOOD PARENT-CHILD BOND WHEN RAISING DISCIPLINED CHILDREN?

The relationship with your child takes time and effort to build up, but it is worth your every effort and will last a lifetime. The greatest test of a strong parent-child relationship will be in times of stress and crisis. It may temporarily weaken as your child grows into an adolescent and tries to forge his own identity and independence. However, if the bond is strong, it will be an anchor in your child's healthy development into an emotionally and socially well-adjusted adult.

As a parent, you will have to start building up the bond and bridges of communication with your child when he is young, as it is usually harder to do these when your child is much older. Even if you had never developed a good parent-child relationship with your child before, it is never too late. It is still possible to reach out to your child if you persevere and do not lose your patience or give up hope.

EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES

PART 2

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Having looked at the key features of effective discipline, let us take a closer look at each of them.

2.1 A POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

For our disciplinary efforts to be effective, there must exist a home environment where the child feels wanted, secure, appreciated and loved. As adults, we know that we want others to approve, appreciate and care for us and our efforts. We are more likely to try to do our best in an environment where we feel appreciated and accepted. It is the same with children. Your child is more likely to obey you when he cares about you and considers it important to obtain your approval of them and their behaviour.

A positive parent-child relationship builds up the parent-child bond and the child's sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. These positive and appropriate feelings and beliefs about himself increase the child's sense of competence and motivate him to do his best.

Successful and effective parents are parents who are loving yet show firmness when the need arises. They use effective and positive methods of discipline. These parents do not hesitate to show unconditional love to their children. At the same time, such parents do not hesitate to discipline the child when his actions warrant it, even when the disciplinary measures may be difficult and unpleasant for both the parents and the child.

Effective discipline does not require aggressive or physically and emotionally hurtful methods. At the end of the day, despite being disciplined, the child is able to realise that his parents still love him, even if they had not caved in to his unreasonable demands or if the disciplinary process had been unpleasant to him.

Effective parents set aside time and effort to build a healthy parent-child relationship, even as they employ effective disciplinary measures in the process. If a healthy and supportive parent-child relationship is so important in bringing up emotionally well-balanced and disciplined children, how can parents achieve this positive state? Let us look at some possible ways.

2.2 WAYS TO BUILD UP A POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

There are many ways to build up a positive and supportive parent-child relationship. Let us now look at these ways.

Take Time To Talk To Your Child

Spending quality time together is essential and important in building up positive relationships with anyone. This is the first important step in building up a positive and supportive parent-child relationship.

Take time to talk warmly to your child about other things besides his schoolwork. In Singapore and Asia, academic achievement is considered very important and most children have parents who are both working. It is very common for busy parents to spend whatever little time they have with their child trying to coach him or supervise him in his schoolwork. Sometimes, busy and frustrated parents end up spending their precious little time admonishing or punishing the child for his incomplete or undone homework.

There is nothing wrong wanting to guide and supervise the child's homework. In fact, it is usually a necessary and even admirable activity in many households. However, what is equally important is that attention is given to the child's emotional needs as well. When the parent-child interaction focuses solely on academic issues, it becomes a lop-sided interaction and the child begins to think that his parents care only about his grades and achievements. The situation becomes worse when the parent and child quarrel and argue over the homework.

To avoid this, you must try to strive for a balanced interaction with your child. Continue to guide and help your child with his homework in a patient manner. However, do make time to enjoy your child's company. Your child will enjoy your company and attention and grow up happier and more socially balanced.

One effective way of communicating with children is to engage with them in their play activities. This might involve just observing your child build a tower with his Lego bricks and reflecting his feelings and play behaviors (e.g. "You look really happy stacking the bricks on top of each other"). By observing and reflecting your child's feelings and by avoiding criticism of his efforts, you are demonstrating an understanding of his feelings and an interest in what he is doing. Pleasurable activities that you can do with your child include playing board or racket games or interactive computer games.

At other times, you might want to take your child out for a meal—just him alone, without other siblings in tow, to give him individual attention. If your child likes to listen to stories, reading suitable books together might be a good idea. Again, do resist the temptation to teach your child how to read or correct his mistakes in a harsh manner.

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Whatever it is, make the time together an enjoyable and interesting experience. Focus on having a nice, warm interactive time together.

Give Positive Attention And Approval

Give your child positive attention and approval regularly. For example, when your child does his homework spontaneously or when he shares his toy with a sibling willingly, praise him and validate his efforts. When your child brings home a drawing from school and shows it to you excitedly, take time to look at it and share his joy and moment of pride. These little gestures of attention and encouragement, which require minimal effort and time and no money, will eliminate the need for your child to unconsciously misbehave to get your attention.

Children who feel that they are being neglected, might misbehave in order to get attention, even if such attention is negative and in the form of nagging, scolding or a beating. This is an unconscious attempt by the child who, like adults, has an innate need for approval and attention. The child is often unaware that the motive for his misbehaviour is to get attention. Therefore, it is not right to think that such a child is being manipulative and then punish him.

Show Interest In His School And Other Activities

Demonstrating interest in your child's school and his other activities can help strengthen the parent-child relationship. Take time to talk to your child about his school, areas of interest and leisure activities. Sometimes, you can try to take part in some of your child's activities, such as playing a tennis game with him or watching him perform in a school concert.

With adolescents, this attempt to show interest in him and his activities might need to be modified, as adolescents generally prefer to do things independently. However, it is still possible to build a positive and supportive relationship with your teenager by trying to engage in activities that interest him. Again, you should avoid the tendency to correct your adolescent's "mistakes", criticise him about his choice of friends or just talk about his schoolwork and grades.

Parent-child conflicts are generally more common in adolescence when the teenager is trying to forge his own identity and independence. You might need to be more flexible with your teenager in order to help him obey the reasonable rules that you have set for him. However, be firm that your adolescent avoids negative, harmful or antisocial habits and destructive peer relationships.

With a teenager, you will have to listen more to his viewpoints and wishes, and negotiate rules and consequences. For example, your 14-year-old teenager might want to go out every week with his friends. However, you might feel that he should go out only once a month. Instead of arguing over this, both parties should discuss the matter calmly and put forward their wishes and viewpoints. A compromise can be reached whereby the teenager is allowed to go out once a fortnight. However, you should let your teenager know that he is expected to behave appropriately during his outing and keep to the time limits that you have set for him.

This style of firm but flexible parenting reduces parent-teenager conflicts and generally works better when dealing with teenagers.

Have A Consistent And Predictable Routine

A consistent and predictable routine will help your child know the family and parental expectations more clearly and abide by them. It also reduces unnecessary conflict between the parent and child. Consistency gives a child a sense of security and these secure feelings are essential for him to develop into an emotionally and socially healthy individual.

Apart from being consistent with family rules and routines, you should also set consistent consequences for your child's actions, so that he knows what will happen if he breaks them. Inconsistencies in your parenting behaviour can create emotional insecurity and confusion in your child.

Ways To Build A Positive Parent-Child Relationship

- Take time to talk to your child
- Give him positive attention and approval regularly
- Show interest in his school and other activities
- Have a consistent and predictable routine in the home

2.3 SIMPLE RULES ABOUT SETTING RULES

Let us now turn our attention to the importance of setting well-defined rules for children to follow in the home. This is an important basic requirement for effective child discipline. Without rules in place, there will be chaos in the home, office, school and in society. Reasonable rules set structure and order in our lives. It is the same for children.

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Set Only A Few Good Rules

The rules that you set for your child should not be too numerous. Set only a few good rules that you think are important for your family to function well. These rules should train a child to respect himself and others around him and ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in the family. Examples include not taking things that do not belong to him without the owner's permission, informing parents if he is going to return late home from school and not hitting a sibling.

Avoid setting too many trivial rules; this can make life rigid for a child. More rules also mean more chances of a child breaking them. This can create unnecessary tension between you and your child. Focus on ensuring that your child keeps a few important and essential rules. This is better than forcing your child to keep too many unreasonable rules that he might have difficulty obeying, thus causing needless conflict and souring the parent-child relationship.

Set Reasonable Rules

Think about the rules that you want your child to follow. Take care to set rules that are appropriate for his age. For example, a 2-year-old child should not be expected to keep himself dry at night. Night-time bladder control is actually achieved at about age five in most children. To punish a 2-year-old for wetting his bed shows a lack of understanding of the normal stages of development in a child. Similarly, a 5-year-old child cannot be expected to sit still and do his homework for more than 20 minutes at a time. A 5-year-old is likely to fidget and become inattentive after about 15–20 minutes. Thus, punishing him for being inattentive after 20 minutes is unreasonable. Therefore, it is important to set rules that are appropriate for a child's age.

Review these rules as your child grows. For example, if your child had to be in bed by 9 pm whilst he was in primary school, he should not be expected to be in bed by the same time when he is age 15.

Do not blame a child if you set unreasonable rules and he fails to keep them. The golden rule about rule-setting is to remember a child's age and set age-appropriate rules.

Let Your Child Know The Rules

If you want a child to obey the rules that you have set for him, you have to let him know what they are first. Make your rules clear to your child from the start. Be

decisive about the rules that you want your child to obey and the consequences that he will have to face if he does not follow the rules. If you are unsure yourself, how can you expect your child to know what you expect from him?

Be consistent about your rules and the consequences of obedience or disobedience. For example, if you have decided that washing hands after going to the toilet is a must, make this rule clear to him. Do not chide him when he doesn't do it one day and then allow him to break this rule on another occasion. If you are inconsistent about your expectations and the consequences for disobeying the rules, it can be rather confusing and difficult for the child to learn what he can or cannot do.

Set Consequences For Disobeying Rules

Once a child knows the rules that he has to obey, let him know the consequences if he disobeys them.

When a child obeys a rule, you can nurture this behavior by providing an encouraging statement. For example, if John keeps his toys away after playing with them (as he had been told), you can say, "John, you worked really hard at packing your toys away neatly. I am pleased with your behaviour. You have set a great example to your little sister." This statement acknowledges his effort to exhibit the desirable behavior, helps him develop motivation to continue his good behaviour and assists him to appreciate his own abilities.

If, on the other hand, if John shows reluctance to put away his toys, you can say, "John, if you do not keep your toys after playing with them, I will not let you play with them tomorrow. So, you can choose to put away your toys today or you can choose not to play with them tomorrow." This will send John a clear message that there is an unpleasant consequence if he disobeys and will encourage him to obey you. Once you have decided on a reasonable consequence that does not affect the child's safety, keep to it so that he knows you are serious about his behaviour.

Rules About Setting Rules

- Set only a few good rules
- Set reasonable rules
- Let your child know the rules
- Set consequences for obeying and disobeying rules

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2.4 DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS

A child must know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable so that he does not unwittingly commit negative behaviours and gets punished. The child should know what his house rules are, what his parents accept and what they disapprove of. Again, remember to set rules and expectations that are appropriate for your child's age.

Reward Desirable Behaviours

The word “discipline” usually conjures a picture of a stern-looking person wielding a cane to stop negative behaviours. However, discipline also means the employment of procedures to notice and reward desirable behaviours so that such behaviours increase.

Some desirable behaviours may automatically occur as the child develops. For example, when a 2-year-old child learns to eat a biscuit with his fingers, his parents can encourage this behavior by praising him for his efforts. Other desirable behaviours, like good study habits and seeking permission to go out, have to be taught. Parents can help by setting an example and guiding their children through the necessary skills.

Provide encouragement to your child whenever he displays desirable behaviour. For example, when John shares his toy with his sister, you could say, “John, you are very generous for sharing your toy with your sister. This is good. I am pleased with your willingness to share.” This reflection will help John give credit to himself and appreciate his abilities. It will also motivate him to repeat the positive behaviour.

Stop Undesirable Behaviours

Undesirable behaviours are behaviours which

- place a child or others in danger,
- ignore or go against the reasonable expectations and rules of parents,
- ignore the rights of others,
- go against societal rules and norms.

Examples of undesirable behaviour include stealing, keeping bad company or frequently coming home later than agreed. To tackle undesirable behaviours, immediate action is needed, especially if there is danger to the child. For example,

provide the child with an explanation why the behavior is risky or undesirable (e.g. poking his finger into an electric socket) so that the child understands why he or she should not repeat that behavior.

Other behaviours may require a consistent consequence that the child does not like. These could be in the form of time-out, removal of privileges or punishment. For example, if your child hits another child during play, remove him immediately from the group and make him sit in a time-out chair for 10 minutes. Before allowing him to rejoin the group, remind him that he will be allowed to play with his friends only if he does so nicely. If your child breaks the rule again, time-out should be consistently carried out until he learns that he can play with his friends only if he does not hit them.

2.5 USING TIME-OUT AS A DISCIPLINARY TOOL

Time-out is a popular method of handling difficult, especially disruptive, behaviour in children. The aim of time-out is to teach the child a better way of keeping his emotions and impulses in check so that he and the people around him do not get hurt.

Time-out is not a punishment. It is meant to steer the child away from an unacceptable behavior. The only discomfort that the child should feel is the withdrawal of your attention.

During time-out, a child is made to leave the place of conflict and spend time alone away from others before his negative behaviour (temper tantrums, aggressiveness, etc) escalates. The child is supposed to stay in this quiet place to calm his angry emotions and stop the negative behaviour. The child is encouraged to stay there until his behavior and emotions are under control. When the child has calmed down, he is allowed to rejoin the others or continue whatever activity he wants to.

Time-out is beneficial because it also allows a frustrated parent to get away from a potentially explosive situation with his child. It is a useful technique for an overwhelmed and angry parent who might be struggling to control his emotions when he is faced with a difficult child. Sometimes, when it is difficult to enforce time-out in a child, the parent can take time-out himself in order to keep his angry emotions in check. Doing this also removes unnecessary attention on the child who might unconsciously be using his difficult behaviour to get his parents' attention.

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Guidelines For Implementing Time-Out

Choose a place where your child can go during time-out. It should be away from the scene of conflict and from the attention of people. A quiet bedroom corner is a good place. For some children, it might be better to let them have time-out in an empty room if they have a tendency to play with objects in the room. Time-out should not be viewed as fun time. It should be a time and place for the child to calm down and reflect on his behaviour.

Decide on the length of time-out. Usually it should be one minute for each year of the child's age. However, if the child calms down earlier than the allotted time, he can be allowed to come out of time-out.

Explain the rationale and rules of time-out. Talk about these even before you start using time-out as a disciplinary tool.

Ensure that the place where time-out is done is safe. Make sure that there are grilles on the window and there are no dangerous objects with which the child could harm himself. Make sure that the door is not locked, if the child does not know how to unlock it.

When the child is made to take time-out, he might cry and scream at first. As time goes by, he is likely to calm down. The child should know that he is expected to stay there until he has calmed down.

If the child comes out of the room before he has calmed down, be firm with him. Quietly bring him back to the room. Tell him calmly that he will be allowed to come out of time-out only when he has calmed down. Do not shout or nag at him as it might give him unwarranted attention.

When time-out is over, do not draw attention to it by talking about it.

2.6 USING LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes misbehaviour can be reduced by making a child face logical consequences for his behaviour. There is no need to nag or hit the child to make him obey.

What is a logical consequence? A logical consequence is the natural outcome of a choice made, whether good or bad. A person learns that a negative consequence is the result of his own action or inaction. Letting a child learn from a logical consequence is better than hitting him to make him obey. A parent who allows a child to face a logical consequence for his misbehavior is more likely to succeed in making the child cooperate in future than an overprotective parent

who rescues his child from the consequences of an action or inaction, by doing things for him and not letting him learn.

When a child is allowed to experience a logical consequence for his behaviour, he develops a sense of responsibility and self-discipline and acquires self-motivation to obey rules. The parent who is willing to let go a little, as long as the child's safety is not at stake, becomes a partner who encourages the child to develop into a responsible person.

CASE STUDY

Mingli refused to heed her mother's advice to take along an umbrella even though the sky was heavily overcast. Mrs Tan worried that her daughter would catch a dreadful cold if it rained. She worried that Mingli might be held up and would be home late. Mrs Tan worried that Mingli would not be able to complete her homework and would miss her favourite television programme if she got stuck in the rain without an umbrella.

But Mingli refused to budge. She thought that her teenage friends would laugh at her if they saw her with an umbrella. It was just not "cool". Moreover, Mingli wanted to show her mother that she was in charge.

As expected, the rain came in sheets and Mingli had to take shelter at a bus stop. It seemed that the unrelenting rain would not stop. Mingli realised to her horror that she was going to miss her favourite television programme. She whipped out her mobile phone and called home. Even though the bus stop was a distance away, Mrs Tan drove in the pouring rain to pick Mingli up. Mingli did not catch a cold and managed to watch television. She was able to complete her homework as well.

This was not the first time Mrs Tan had "rescued" Mingli. Did she help Mingli to be a responsible person? Would she always be around to rescue Mingli? By doing everything for Mingli and saving her from the negative consequences of her decision (not taking along an umbrella when it was going to rain), Mrs Tan was helping her not to take responsibility for herself.

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CASE STUDY

Mrs Chan's daughter, Dawn, can sometimes be as willful as Mingli. Mrs Chan is a doting mother like Mrs Tan. But Mrs Chan knows that Dawn has to learn discipline and responsibility even if that meant she has to be firm with her.

Like Mingli, Dawn refused to take along an umbrella in spite of an impending storm. However, when it did rain cats and dogs, Mrs Chan refused to pick up Dawn from the bus stop. Dawn had to wait for the rain before going home. Consequently, she missed a television programme she wanted to watch badly. On top of that, Dawn could not complete her homework and was punished for it.

Because Mrs Chan did not rescue Dawn from the logical consequence of her behaviour (refusing to carry an umbrella), Dawn learnt quickly that there would be an unpleasant logical consequence if she did not keep to certain rules. By refusing to overprotect Dawn, Mrs Chan actually helped Dawn develop a better sense of responsibility than Mingli.

Why Spanking Is Not A Good Method Of Discipline

Although spanking may immediately reduce or stop an undesirable behaviour, its effectiveness decreases with subsequent use. With each subsequent spanking, the ability of the spanking to stop negative behaviour becomes smaller such that a greater physical force is required to produce the same initial effect. You might have to hit the child harder to achieve the same effect as the first spanking. This practice is also becoming socially unacceptable and potentially unsafe.

Child abuse, where a child is physically injured through a deliberate adult action, can easily occur if spanking is used frequently to discipline a child. Some children have been seriously injured when their parents resorted to spanking as a regular disciplinary measure. Some unfortunate children have even tragically died. The risk is greater when the adult, who underestimates his strength, lashes out in a moment of rage.

Here are some reasons why spanking is not a good method of discipline:

- Spanking, especially if severe or chronic, can lead to problems in the parent-child relationship. The child feels ashamed, angry and resentful and has difficulty relating positively with the parent. The child begins to see the parent as an unreasonable disciplinarian.
- Spanking may cause the child to react aggressively towards the parent (in self-defence or anger). This may further aggravate the negative parent-child relationship.
- Spanking models aggressive behaviour as a solution to conflict. The child may use aggression to deal with the conflicts that he faces with his peers. This leads to significant interpersonal relationship problems with others.
- Discipline becomes harder to implement as the child grows into adolescence and can no longer be spanked because of his size.
- Studies have shown that children who were spanked harshly and frequently are more likely to grow into adults who spank their spouse, children and others when they themselves get angry.
- Spanking does not help to teach the child how to behave in a particular situation. Instead, the child's positive and appropriate behaviors should be reinforced by praise and encouragements when he demonstrates them. Such positive acknowledgments lead to a good sense of self-esteem and competence in the child.

2.7 SPANKING — TO DO OR NOT TO DO?

In many cultures and for centuries, parents have often used spanking as a method of disciplining their children. Even in our modern world, spanking is a commonly used disciplinary tool. Does its frequent use make it an acceptable tool? Should we continue to use it? How do we use it sparingly, without harming the child?

Spanking refers to the act of hitting a child with an open hand on the buttocks, legs or arms with the intention of modifying his behaviour without causing injury. It is very commonly used by parents and adult caregivers to discipline children.

However, it is not an advisable method as there is a high risk of injuring the child physically and emotionally during spanking, especially if it becomes a persistent method of discipline. The line between spanking and child abuse is very thin. It is not difficult to cross the line and become an abuser of your own child.

For Review Only

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Parvathy Pathy

Dr Parvathy Pathy is a Senior Consultant Psychiatrist attached to the Child Guidance Clinic at the Institute of Mental Health. She has been practicing medicine since she graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1983 and qualified as a psychiatrist in 1990. She received further training in the area of child abuse and juvenile offending at the Royal Children's Hospital, in Melbourne, Australia, and from the Young Abusers Project in London.

Dr Parvathy sees and counsels children, teenagers and their families who come to her with a wide range of emotional, psychological and behavioural problems. She is interested in children's and women's issues. In 2002, Dr Pathy wrote *Kim's Story*, a short story about unconditional love and adoption for the Institute of Mental Health.

Ms Fiona Tan

Ms Fiona Tan is a Senior Clinical Psychologist attached to the Child Guidance Clinic at the Institute of Mental Health. She earned her Honours Degree in Psychology and Crime and Deviance from the University of Toronto. Following her graduation, she worked as an Intake Counselor at Family Transition Place, a women's shelter in Orangeville, Ontario where she counselled adolescent and adult survivors of domestic violence and sexual assaults.

After returning to Singapore in 2007, Ms Tan obtained her Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology at the National University of Singapore. She currently provides assessments and therapeutic interventions for children and adolescents who struggle with anxiety or mood difficulties as well as trauma and offending issues. She is especially interested in working with survivors of traumatic events.

Mr Shyon Loo

Mr Shyon Loo is a Senior Clinical Psychologist under the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). He holds a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology and Certificate in Advanced Studies in Counseling from the Loyola University in Maryland. He worked at the University of Maryland and the Johns Hopkins University in the US before joining the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at IMH. He currently provides assessments and therapeutic interventions for young persons with inappropriate sexualised behaviour, young offenders, victims of trauma and youths at risk of offending.