Children are Unbeatable

SEVEN VERY GOOD REASONS NOT TO HIT CHILDREN

Rhonda Pritchard

Manaakitia a tatou tamariki
CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

families commission
kōmihana ā whānau
> Giving New Zealand families a voice *Te reo o te whānau*

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FOREWORD

In 2004 my Office commissioned an extensive review of research into the discipline and guidance of children. This review found that the use of physical punishment increases the likelihood of disruptive or 'bad' behaviour, and can lead to other poor outcomes for children. Physical punishment is experienced by children as anger from adults that leaves them confused and resentful. We learnt that physical punishment does not contribute to helping our children behave well in the medium or longer term, and that there are more effective ways of guiding their behaviour.

A more recent study of young New Zealanders by the Otago University School of Medicine, published in January 2006 in the New Zealand Medical Journal, found that four out of five had been physically punished as children. Interestingly, those in the study reported that often the punishment didn't fit the crime. Some children had been severely physically punished for small offences, even for just being in the same room as an angry parent.

Physical punishment is a long-held tradition in our society and one practised across all cultures within it. It disadvantages children from all ethnic groups. It's time to respond to the evidence by changing our behaviour. I believe that changing this tradition will benefit all of our children and wider society in the years to come. This booklet sets out to answer many of the questions that people are asking, and it achieves that goal well by responding in an informed and informal way.

Children are Unbeatable is a wonderful resource to help us better understand the issues surrounding the need for behaviour change towards more positive and respectful treatment of our children.

This booklet provides seven very good reasons not to smack children, along with practical guidance on managing children's behaviour without the use of physical punishment. It is intended primarily for those involved in educating and influencing parents, and parents and the public will also benefit from reading it.

My thanks to Rhonda Pritchard and George Hook for producing this resource, to Denise Durkin for her illustrations, and to UNICEF and the Families Commission for their support of this project.

Dr. Cindy Kiro (Children's Commissioner)

Introduction

What is a smack?

> *A smack is parents trying to hit you, but instead of calling it a hit they call it a smack.* (7 year old girl)

This booklet outlines the case against the physical punishment of children and is written for people who support and guide parents and for parents themselves. It distinguishes between discipline, which children need to help them grow into responsible, cooperative and compassionate adults, and smacking or hitting which hurts them and defeats the very purposes of discipline. The principles of positive parenting and practical suggestions for parents are also included.

I am a parent, step-parent and family counsellor. I know that children are lovable and delightful. They can also be demanding, 'assertive' and, sometimes, test us to our limits. They can stir a wide range of feelings from warmth, tenderness and pride to irritation, frustration and even blood-boiling rage. Sometimes, self control is a challenge for parents.

Children also find it challenging to manage their emotions. Indeed, they have many things to learn in the process of growing up: to treat other people with respect, develop compassion, be kind to animals, follow directions at home and at school, play their part in the family, communicate effectively, gain skills, complete tasks, care for property, and obey the law. How do they learn these important lessons?

I grew up in a family and in a society where smacking was the norm. Parents believed it was the best way to teach children to obey and become socialised. As a parent, on some occasions, I have also smacked. I stopped, and no longer defend this practice. I have come to realise that smacking is hitting, and hitting causes pain.

A little smack may not actually do long-term harm, and it would be excessive to call it assault or abuse. The problem is in knowing at what point on a scale of severity or frequency does smacking begin to injure a child both physically and emotionally. Not all smacking leads to abuse, but abuse all too frequently starts with smacking.

It is a lot safer to avoid this practice altogether - not only to protect our own children. Just as importantly, it is the step we can each take towards creating a less violent society.

We are human and sometimes lose control, and that is both understandable and forgivable, but we need to learn other ways of managing strong feelings. This does not mean that we need to be so restrained that children never see us angry, or never see us taking a stand.

It is part of a parent's role to give directions, set limits, and create consequences. This role does not entitle parents to do anything they choose with their children. Sometimes I hear people claim that physical punishment is a parent's right. This is deeply disturbing. If an old person wet the bed, or knocked and broke a plate, or was rude to a family member, we would not condone hitting them as punishment. We would find it offensive and call it cruel.

Common beliefs

So how do we justify hitting children? What do people say to themselves that makes it OK?

They say:

> It didn't do me any harm.
>
> Children need to learn right from wrong. This way they get the message – short and sharp. It's far worse to use harsh words – that's emotional abuse.
>
> It's the only way to protect children from getting hurt – if they touch a power point or run onto the road.
>
> It's in the Bible: spare the rod and spoil the child.
>
> But we do this in love and our children know this.
>
> It's just part of the culture.
>
> It's only a light smack. It doesn't really hurt them.
>
> If they hit others, they need to know how it feels.

In reply

You'll be glad to know that each of these justifications can be answered and challenged.

For example, there is an answer to 'It's far worse to use harsh words – that's emotional abuse'. Verbal emotional abuse and hitting are both harmful. They are not substitutes, and one is not better than the other. To practise and defend hitting creates additional harm. It expresses an attitude that children are lesser human beings, who do not deserve the same protections and rights as all other human beings.

And in answer to the question of cultural and ethnic differences, a review of the research on the discipline of children carried out by New Zealand social scientists shows that 'physical punishment does not have different effects for different ethnic groups.' In addition, 'there is no evidence that Maori and Pacific people are more accepting of physical punishment. In fact one recent study showed that European New Zealanders were more likely than Maori or Pacific people to think that physical punishment of children should be legally sanctioned.'[1]

The heart of the matter

I'm going to assume that most people, even if they can convince themselves of any of the arguments listed above, know, in their hearts, that hitting children is wrong. In the words of New Zealand child advocate and former Children's Commissioner, Dr Ian Hassall:

> *It feels wrong and when we reflect, we know in our hearts it is wrong. What ordinary parent can recall the look of fear when they raised their arm to strike and the expression of pain that followed, without feeling deep remorse. We may justify such an act to ourselves with the support of custom or religion but we know it was wrong.*

> *Even worse, if as parents we have become inured to the fear and pain we cause by hitting our children, what have we become? And if our children over the years become used to us hitting them and regard it as normal, what have they become? . . . We are not brutes. We do love our children. Against our better judgement we have fallen into the habit, generation by generation, of hitting our children.* [2]

This booklet outlines and explains seven very good reasons to break this habit of generations. Essentially it explains why hitting children is emotionally damaging, a breach of their human rights, psychologically harmful, potentially dangerous, unsupported by the core Christian message, in conflict with important child-rearing goals, and also unnecessary. Children can be raised, managed and guided to become well adjusted adults without physical punishment, using a range of approaches that millions of parents have learned to use in other countries[3] and increasingly here in New Zealand.

By breaking the habit of hitting, and adopting more positive practices, we can unequivocally show our children the love we feel for them, and the respect they deserve.

Reason 1

HITTING CHILDREN LEAVES THEM FEELING HURT AND CONFUSED.

'It feels like they don't love you any more.'

INTRODUCTION

Not many children are asked about their views on how their parents treat them. Parents are used to seeing their children upset, but the next minute they are happy again. Parents are certainly used to hearing them protesting, especially about fairness, but often don't pay the protests much heed. Some children don't speak out or stop speaking out because they don't expect to be heard.

While parents understand a great deal about their children, it is not possible for them to know exactly how their children experience family life. It is important to ask children directly.

This section will show how unwise it is to underestimate the sensitivity, perceptiveness and wisdom of children.

They do have views on how they are treated and, when given the opportunity, express those views in ways that most adults will find both persuasive and irresistible (see the SKIP video listed under Resources on page 49).

WHAT DO CHILDREN SAY ABOUT BEING PUNISHED BY PARENTS?

A number of studies of children's views on family discipline have been carried out both overseas and in New Zealand. Researchers have been careful to protect the children from being individually identified, from being forced to answer questions they don't want to answer, and to be allowed to talk about families in general – not necessarily about their own family if they chose not to. Both the children and their parents gave informed consent to their involvement in the studies.

An example close to home is the New Zealand study[4] of 80 children carried out by Terry Dobbs, sponsored by Save the Children, and published in 2005.

The 80 children were aged between 5 and 14 years, and came from a range of backgrounds and locations.

The broad focus of the study was to hear children's views on family discipline. Below is a summary of the overall findings. These New Zealand children:

- had a good understanding of which behaviours are considered unacceptable within the family
- believed that family rules and expectations were not clearly communicated by their parents
- reported heavy use of physical punishment as a primary means of discipline (only 8% had not been hit)
- reported that parental disciplinary messages were often not understood, were delivered in an inconsistent manner, and without implicit instruction
- strongly wanted their parents to be fair

- reported dangerous levels of physical punishment in a number of cases (approximately one third of the children had been hit on the face, head or back, and approximately a quarter of the children had been hit with implements)
- reported physical punishment as a negative experience
- associated physical punishment with parents' anger
- reported that parents often regretted using physical punishment
- reported being most often smacked for hurting others
- thought physical punishment was the worst form of discipline
- gave clear advice about effective parenting techniques, and preferred time out, withdrawal of privileges or being grounded, to being hit.

Children receive a contradictory message when parents hit them for hitting others. They are being told not to hit by a parent who is hitting them. Children feel strongly about fairness. When punished for something they didn't do, for example, the report stated that children 'often experience a desire to take "revenge" and "take it out" on parents and siblings'.

So in summary, 'these children were clear that a smack is a hard hit that hurts both emotionally and physically. Smacking makes children feel sad, angry and fearful, and negatively affects their relationship with the person who smacked them '. [4]

The New Zealand children's views are mirrored in many research studies from overseas: in the UK, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Africa and Sweden.

A recurring theme of the studies is the finding that a majority of children, wherever they live, think smacking is not OK. This is in contrast with typical findings from adult surveys in those countries where physical punishment is legally allowed. In those places a majority of adults think physical punishment is acceptable under some circumstances.

So what do children say in their own words about discipline in their families?

IN THE WORDS OF THE CHILDREN

The following quotes are from children in New Zealand, Ireland and the UK.[4,5]

Their feelings:

It hurts and it's painful inside – it's like breaking your bones. (7 year old girl)

It's loud and sore, and it stings. (5 year old boy)

It feels like you've been adopted or something and you're not part of their family. (11 year old girl)

You feel like you don't like your parents any more. (7 year old girl)

You feel upset because they are hurting you, and you love them so much, and then all of a sudden they hit you and you feel as though they don't care about you. (13 year old girl)

The after-effects:

When my parents smack me it makes me feel unloved and angry. It does not teach me a lesson, in fact it makes me want to defy them even more. (14 year old boy)

It distances you from your parents if they hit you. You don't want to talk to them about anything. (15 year old boy)

You feel sort of as though you want to run away because they're sort of being mean to you and it hurts a lot. (7 year old girl)

You would start lying to your parents if you thought it would get you out of trouble and avoid getting a smacking. (15 year old girl)

The confusion and sense of unfairness:

You can't have a say when they are angry and hitting you. It's too late for that. (9 year old boy)

Sometimes they just hit you and you don't have a clue why. (12 year old boy)

Parents should help you understand; sometimes I don't know why I get a smack. (5 year old girl)

Most kids get smacked for hurting someone like kicking your brother or sister. (9 year old boy)

Probably you did it by accident and it looked like you did it on purpose and they smacked you and it was wrong to smack. (7 year old girl)

Their observations of adults:

Grown-ups grow out of the habit and if they still have the habit they don't smack each other, instead they smack children. (7 year old girl)

I think they feel a bit sort of sorry, but they don't want to say, but they do. (7 year old girl)

Some parents are so stressed out that they build everything up inside them and then use their children as punch bags – they need to stop doing that and get help instead of taking it out on their children. (14 year old girl)

Depending like sometimes they like deliberately want to hurt you. (12 year old girl)

Adults hit in anger. They may not mean to hurt the child but they do. (13 year old girl)

Their views on smacking:

Adults do not like to be hit when they were children so why do it to us? I will not hit my child because I think violence is really wrong. Your home is meant to be a safe place and not somewhere you are afraid of. (12 year old girl).

Smacking doesn't really work because they have to keep doing it. (9 year old boy)

IN SUMMARY

- When children are asked about family discipline they do have views of their own and can express them.
- Children wish their parents would explain more about what they expect.
- Children have a strong wish to be treated fairly.
- Children think hitting is the worst kind of punishment.
- Children associate being hit with their parents' anger.
- Children think other kinds of discipline work better and can give examples.
- Being hit causes children physical and emotional pain.
- Being hit will often confuse children, especially if it is punishment for hitting others, and from people who love them.

Reason 2

HITTING CHILDREN IS A BREACH OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS.

'Most kids don't know they've got rights.'

INTRODUCTION

But what about the rights of parents? Surely parents have a right to raise their own children according to their own values and beliefs.

At first sight this sounds reasonable. But questions immediately arise. When parents talk about their 'own children' does this mean they 'own' their children?

As a society are we willing to agree to parents raising their children according to any values or beliefs? What about parents who believe that genital mutilation is acceptable? Or parents who place no value on children having any formal education? Some parents do not believe in medical treatment for their children on the basis of their convictions.

Let's begin with an assumption: that we all accept that children are human beings who have moral status. This means that each child has a distinctness, an individuality that needs to be recognised. The child is born into a family and derives their identity partly from being a member of the family or whanau, but is not just an extension of their parents. Each child is an individual being, growing towards autonomy. Because of their humanity but also because of their youth, all children deserve to be respected and there are things that should not be done to them.

So what can be said about the rights of parents and the rights of children?

TALKING ABOUT RIGHTS

The subject of 'rights' is most often raised when people feel their freedom to do something has been restricted, or when they think they or someone else has been abused or violated.

There is a tendency to talk about rights as if they are 'inalienable', as if:

- everyone in the world has them
- we have them from birth
- they have always existed
- they will always exist.

In reality, there is much debate and no universal agreement about rights, and, as values and beliefs change in our society, our rights also change. Some rights are removed and some rights are created. In New Zealand in the recent past, for example, *the Human Rights Amendment Act (1993)* limited the 'right' to free speech by making it illegal to 'incite racial hatred', but recognised the right of all citizens to be treated without discrimination, for example, on the basis of race, age, religion, gender and sexual orientation.

Recognising and enforcing rights depends on:

- a large enough pool of people in any given society reaching agreement; or
- the government making laws; or
- states combining to make international accords.

There's not much use conferring rights or claiming rights without expecting or imposing an accompanying duty on others to honour them.

And then there are the different kinds of rights: unwritten **moral** rights and **legal** rights. In New Zealand, for example, we assume some moral rights, such as the right to have children and the right to travel, but we have never written them down in law. On the other hand, we have turned some moral rights, such as the right to privacy and the right to fair trial, into legal rights.

Another way of categorising rights is to distinguish between **'protections from'** (welfare rights) and **'freedoms to'** (liberty rights).

New Zealanders enjoy protection from slavery, starvation, capital punishment, oppression and torture. Happily, we have come to take these protections for granted. But these rights are by no means universally accepted.

We also enjoy the freedom to speak, to hold our own beliefs, and to assemble in groups. As a society we have apparently all agreed that these freedoms or liberties have achieved the status of rights, which we require others to accommodate. But would we agree to add the 'freedom to hit children' to such a list?

Adults and children need some rights in common, but they also need some separate rights that relate to their maturity and capacity to make choices. Adults need more liberty rights relating to self-determination. Children need more welfare rights relating to their dependency on parents to both protect and prepare them for becoming autonomous adults.

So, how can the needs of adults for freedom and the needs of children for protection and gradually developing autonomy come together?

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted this convention[6] after many years of consultation with governments and children's organisations all over the world. The assembly wanted to ensure that the world recognised that people under 18, as young human beings, have human rights, and also need special protection.

The United Nations is not a world government and cannot make laws that bind its member nations. It creates a forum for its members to make, and then be bound by, the voluntary agreements or 'conventions' they enter into. New Zealand ratified the Convention in 1993, and thus agreed to abide by its provisions.

The rights of children

The Convention sets out the rights of children in 54 articles and spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have. The articles can be divided into categories of rights, but these rights are also viewed as indivisible and support an holistic approach to every child's wellbeing.

According to the Convention, every child has a right:

- to survival
- to develop to their fullest potential
- to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation
- to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

The four core principles are:

- non-discrimination
- a priority on the best interests of the child
- the right to life, survival and development
- respect for the views of the child.

The responsibilities of the state, and the responsibilities and rights of parents

Article 3 of the Convention highlights the state's responsibility towards children:

> *In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*

The role of parents is included in the same article:

> *State parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents . . .*

and also in Article 18:

> *Parents, or as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.*

So the rights of parents are derived from their duties to care for, protect and nurture children. It might be inferred that parents have a right to seek and gain support from the state to help them carry out these duties as parents, so as to enable them to act on this basic concern for the best interests of the child.

And what does the Convention say about the physical punishment of children?

Article 19 states:

> *State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse . . . while in the care of parent/s, legal guardian/s or any other person who has the care of the child.*

While this article does not explicitly mention physical punishment, it is generally interpreted as affording children protection from this kind of treatment.[7]

Those states that signed the Convention agreed to be monitored by the International Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 1994 this committee said that physical punishment of children is incompatible with the Convention, and has recommended that ratifying nations ensure that all forms of violence against children, however mild, are prohibited.

And so we can say that when New Zealand ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1993, a child's moral right to protection from any form of physical punishment was internationally confirmed.

So this is why we can say that hitting children is a breach of their human rights.

IN SUMMARY

- The rights of human beings are established in societies as expressions of predominant values and beliefs.
- As values and beliefs change so do rights.
- Rights can only be enforced when duties are imposed on others to honour them.
- There are moral rights that are observed in practice, and legal rights that are written into state laws and international conventions.
- Children are human beings who are entitled to hold rights just as adults are.
- The rights of parents are associated with their duty to care for, protect and nurture their children.
- Because of their vulnerability, children need special rights to protection.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says that both the state and parents should place a priority on the best interests of the child.
- The Convention includes a child's right to protection from 'all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse'.
- The International Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the policies and practices of ratifying nations, says that physical punishment is not compatible with the Convention.

Reason 3

HITTING CHILDREN DOES THEM HARM.

'If they're little they'll think it's alright to go off and hit somebody else.'

INTRODUCTION

I was smacked as a child, and it never did me any harm.

This is probably the most commonly heard defence for hitting children and, of course, it's hard to challenge, especially if such comments are made by people who are well-adjusted, productive and responsible adults. They don't appear to carry any scars from the physical punishment they received.

There are a number of possibilities that account for this kind of experience. Common sense would suggest, of course, that children are unlikely to be badly harmed by rare incidents of smacking without injury, especially if their parents are predominantly warm and loving, and use other positive methods of discipline to guide and direct their children.

In cases where hitting is frequent and severe, there are some fortunate children who survive because they are especially resilient, have a strong sense of self, and are not reactive. Some do not adopt this treatment as a model to imitate, and manage to resist the impulse to be violent to others.

But this still does not mean it is OK to hit children just because some of them survive it. It means that some children adapt and mature despite being smacked or hit. For so many reasons, the case for avoiding physical punishment far outweighs any of the justifications for using it.

A very strong element of the case against hitting children is the evidence based on research. The question of whether children suffer harm from physical punishment has been investigated in many countries throughout the world.

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT ON CHILDREN

There is a mountain of research on how children are affected by different kinds of parental discipline. It becomes a challenge not only to read it all, but to make sense of it. There are differences in definition, in research methods, in groups studied and in quality. It's also difficult to clearly establish the causal link between parents' behaviour and children's behaviour.

Lay people have to rely on skilled social scientists to collect all the studies and carry out a 'meta-analysis' – critically reviewing each piece of research, identifying any consistent themes in all of the findings, accounting for inconsistencies, and presenting conclusions in an accessible and readable form.

Where this process of meta-analysis is applied to other topics in the field of psychology, it usually leads to great variability in the results and conclusions.

On the subject of how children are affected by physical punishment we are presented with a rare phenomenon. The findings from the numerous studies are remarkably consistent.

Four senior researchers, led by Professor Anne Smith from the Children's Issues Centre at the University of Otago, were commissioned by the Children's Commissioner to review the research and report on the effects of physical punishment on children. They read and analysed hundreds of research papers.

The following questions, findings and conclusions are drawn from their report, The Discipline and Guidance of Children: A Summary of the Research (2004).[1]

Does physical punishment make children do what they are told?

- Sometimes, but only in the short-term. The short-term effect is the one and only area where the findings from the collated research are mixed. Some studies show that physical punishment is linked to immediate compliance and some studies do not show such a link.
- The writers add these cautions:

  There is a built-in risk of escalation with the use of physical punishment . . . which means that it tends to get more severe with continued use, which increases the danger for children.

  Immediate compliance does not mean that children will obey the parental rules next time.

  Other more peaceful parental strategies to induce compliance, such as reasoning, can work equally well.

How are children affected in the long-term?

- The findings on the long-term effects are overwhelmingly consistent. Physical punishment produces negative outcomes for children.
- As might be expected, the severity of the effects is linked to the severity of the punishment. Mild punishment has some bad effects, but severe punishment is linked to worse outcomes.

- Of the 92 studies reviewed by Elizabeth Gershoff[8], over 90% found that parental physical punishment is linked with negative behaviours and experiences of children.
    - Behaviours and experiences that **increased** included:
        - child aggression (being violent to others)
        - child delinquency and antisocial behaviour
        - the risk of becoming a victim of more serious physical abuse
        - adult aggression later in life
        - adult criminal and antisocial behaviour
        - risk of abusing one's own child or spouse.
    - Behaviours and experiences that **decreased** included:
        - the quality of relationship between parent and child
        - child mental health, e.g., poorer self-esteem and poorer adjustment to school
        - moral internalisation (physical punishment actually lessens the chances that children will learn the rules and values their parents are wishing to instil)
        - academic achievement
        - adult mental health.

How do we know whether the bad outcomes for children are because of smacking?

In five studies where behaviour was observed at different points in time 'higher rates of misbehaviour occurred two and four years later in children who were smacked, compared with those who experienced little or no corporal punishment'.[1]

IN SUMMARY

- People who believe that their own history of being smacked did them no harm are likely to have been infrequently and/or mildly punished.
- Those who survived severe punishment without emotional scars are the fortunate minority, who either had other protections in place or were unusually resilient.
- The effects of physical punishment on children have been investigated through hundreds of studies carried out in many parts of the world.
- There is evidence from some studies that smacking does sometimes make children do what they are told in the short-term, but there is also evidence from other studies that it does not, and that other methods work just as well or better. (For more information on what works better and why see Reasons 6 and 7.)
- When all of the research on long-term effects of physical punishment is combined and reviewed there is a remarkable consistency in the findings.
- The long-term effects are negative on every measure of child and adult well-being, and worse if the physical punishment is severe and frequent.

Reason 4

HITTING CHILDREN CAN LEAD TO INJURY.

'It hurts and you could break a bone or something. If you did it hard enough you could damage something.'

INTRODUCTION

Parents who believe that smacking is the best way to discipline children usually offer the explanation that their purpose is to teach and guide their children. They describe incidents of applying this method 'lovingly' when they are in a state of complete self-control and rationality.

There is a strong body of evidence[4], however, which shows that parents most often smack their children when they are angry or frustrated. Many parents will admit this and feel bad for losing control. 'I just lost it,' they often say.

Whether parents are cool-headed or wild when they hit a child, they would be horrified to think that their action is abusive. The very idea

would be shocking to them. In their hearts they love their children and want the best for them.

Child abuse is viewed by these parents as completely different from discipline or punishment or even hitting in the heat of the moment.

THE LINK BETWEEN SMACKING AND ABUSE

Sadly, there is a substantial body of evidence to support the view that physical punishment and child abuse are not completely separate and distinct phenomena; that they are behaviours along the same continuum; and that physical abuse so often occurs in the context of punishment.

Evidence for this is found in reports reviewing large numbers of substantiated child abuse cases at national levels. In one American review, for example, it was found that abuse 'almost invariably' occurred in the context of a disciplinary action'.[9]

In a more recent Canadian study of over 130,000 reports of child maltreatment, it was found that 69% of child physical abuse 'occurred as a result of child physical punishment (e.g., hitting with a hand or object) that led to physical harm, or put the child at substantial risk of harm.'[10]

How does the slide from punishment to abuse happen?

Canadian psychologist and international authority on the effects of physical punishment on children, Associate Professor Joan Durrant, explains the slide from punishment to abuse in this way: 'This transformation takes place through a process that is all-too-familiar to most parents.'[11]

She points out that some parents have little knowledge of child development, or of typical child behaviour at various developmental stages. Consequently, these parents often have unrealistic expectations about children's capacities for self control.

Dr Durrant describes the dynamic between child and parent in terms of the following stages'.[11]

'When a child demonstrates:

- a desire for autonomy (e.g., "No!"),
- a drive for exploration and experimentation (e.g., touching grandma's vase), and
- difficulty in exerting self-control (e.g., tantrums),

the parent may become frustrated and angry, attributing the child's behaviour to defiance or malicious intent.'

If the parent starts smacking, 'the child, now physically hurt and distressed, will stop performing the behaviour, thereby reinforcing the parent for using physical punishment.'

The child's motivation to keep trying new things and limited understanding of the world are likely to result in 'another act objectionable to the parent.'

The parent, now believing that physical punishment worked before, smacks again.

As the smacking increases in frequency, the child's behaviour gets worse.

▼

The pattern is reinforced by those family members, friends and onlookers who also believe in physical punishment. When they observe the child being fractious and 'naughty' they cannot resist offering the comment: "What that child needs is a good hiding!"

▼

As the parent becomes increasingly reliant on smacking, the child becomes increasingly aggressive and defiant. 'Numerous studies have demonstrated that the frequency of smacking is positively related to deviant child behaviour, such as aggression (27 studies) and antisocial behaviour (12 studies)'.[8]

▼

The parent in turn becomes increasingly angry and may increase the intensity of the punishment until the child is injured.

So what starts out as an act of punishment to guide and control the child becomes an act of violence – the worst nightmare for the child and the parent.

THE EFFECT ON A CHILD'S BRAIN

Physical injury is only one of the terrible effects of child abuse. Excessive and frequent hitting, as with other forms of violence in the home, creates a condition of persisting threat for a child and 'persisting threat results in persisting fear'.

International authority on brain development in children, Dr Bruce Perry, has found that 'persisting fear and adaptations to the threat present in the vortex of violence in the home alter the development of the child's brain, resulting in changes in physical, emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social functioning'.[12]

Children who are exposed to violence are more likely to be violent because they experience it and see it modelled. They also become physiologically hyper-aroused and hyperactive because of the threat response – *freeze* or *fight* or *flight* – being so frequently activated in the brain. Any human being in this state has difficulty with regulating emotions and problem-solving, and is more likely to react impulsively or shut down or act out with aggression.

IN SUMMARY

- Parents do not set out to be abusive to their children.
- There is a link between smacking and abuse. In the majority of cases of child abuse, the parent started with smacking or hitting and ended with injuring the child.
- If hitting is frequent and severe, not only may the child's body be injured, but their brain functioning may be impaired as well.
- Parents are more likely to become abusive if:
    - they have been victims of abuse themselves
    - they are under great stress
    - they have little knowledge of what is normal and what to expect of a child at their age and stage
    - they and their surrounding family and friends believe physical punishment is the way to discipline
    - they don't know other ways to guide and manage their child's behaviour.
- Parents do not set out to be abusive to their children. (Yes. This has already been said. It's so important it bears repeating.)

Reason 5

THE 'ROD' IS NOT FOR HITTING, BUT FOR GUIDING AND COMFORTING.

'Jesus loves me.'

INTRODUCTION

New Zealand society is made up of many ethnic groups and cultures with a wide range of world-views, some based on faith and some based on other value systems.

The Christian faith has been particularly influential. It dominated our colonial history, was adopted by many Maori, and is the faith of many of the communities that have arrived here from other parts of the world. The beliefs, values, rituals and festivals continue to be woven into our social, political and family lives, affecting the lives of non-Christian Kiwis as well. It is interesting that the Bible itself represents a variety of cultural influences - predominantly Jewish, but also Persian, Greek and Roman, and it was written over thousands of years by numerous authors.

While the Bible may no longer be the most often read book, it continues to be quoted as a reference to express and promote values – especially family values. Its messages have been interpreted in many different ways. Some Christians believe in a literal interpretation, and on the basis of a few texts, have concluded that parents have a duty to physically punish their children to 'drive out their foolishness'. But there is another perspective on the discipline of children, held by many Christians, which has a strong scriptural basis.

This section will describe the case for not hitting children drawing on the words and opinions of a range of respected New Zealand church leaders and clergy representing Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Church of Christ denominations.

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

> *Spare the rod and spoil the child.*

This all too familiar phrase is often used to argue that the Bible supports smacking or hitting children and that responsible parents would be failing in their duty if they did not.

The specific phrase does not actually appear in the Bible but in a 17th century poem by Samuel Butler.

The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament does include verses that have been interpreted as endorsing physical punishment, e.g.,

> *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.* (Proverbs 13:24)

and

> *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.* (Proverbs 22:15)

The Book of Proverbs is the only part of the Bible that includes verses that might be quoted to imply that physical punishment of children is

recommended, but a literal English language based interpretation of these verses has been challenged by many church leaders and biblical scholars.

New Zealand based Samoan minister and theologian, Nove Vailaau, for example, points out that in the English version of *The Book of Proverbs* the word 'rod' was translated from the Hebrew word *shebet*, which meant sceptre or staff, as in a shepherd's staff used for guiding the sheep. If the original writer had meant a beating rod, the Hebrew word *muwcar* would have been used.

> *In this sense, the 'rod' is used metaphorically. Psalm 23 defines this rod as a rod that brings comfort in times of uncertainty. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." . . . A shepherd uses his rod to gently guide his flock - not to strike them. The 'rod' may also be understood figuratively as referring to the Torah, the Law, which guides the people within the boundaries of God's will.*[13]

The inference to be taken is not that parents will 'spoil' their children if they don't hit them, but that they will spoil their children if they don't guide, protect and teach them.

At the heart of the Christian message

The Bible contains multiple images of God; sometimes as violent and punishing, and sometimes as loving and compassionate. It often portrays human beings as fallen, sinful creatures who need to be punished or to suffer in order to be saved.

In the words of another New Zealand minister Glynn Cardy: 'Beating sin out of people has a long and sad history in the Church'. He recommends that Christians 'choose a God who abhors violence: to connect with an historical Jesus who did not use violence to create solutions but rather was a victim of those who did. There are no biblical stories about Jesus or any of his disciples being violent towards or condoning violence towards children. Rather there are stories of Jesus welcoming and healing children.'[14]

Nove Vailaau also explains that Scripture places a greater emphasis on love by quoting from the New Testament:

> *"Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud . . . it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. . . It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."* (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, 13).

He goes on to write:

> *As Christians, we are not called so much to be the administrators of His Justice ("Do not judge, or you too will be judged") as we are called to be the embodiment of God's Love, perfected in humanity – and for humanity – by Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you." This is the kind of love parents must share with their children.*[13]

IN SUMMARY

A joint public statement[15] by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Bishops of Auckland, with Presbyterian, Methodist and Church of Christ ministers included these words:
The majority of parents want to do the best for their children. It is misguided to believe that hitting children is in their interests. The most effective way of guiding children's behaviour is through example. This was the way of Jesus whose life role-modelled a preference for love over violence. By contrast, hitting children endorses a pattern of violence which is passed on from one generation to the next.

Reason 6

HITTING CONFLICTS WITH ESSENTIAL GOALS OF RAISING CHILDREN.

'Young children don't know a lot and they might need more teaching to understand what adults understand.'

INTRODUCTION

Children need to learn and they need discipline.

We all nod our heads in agreement. But what is meant by the word 'discipline'? To many people it has become inextricably linked with punishment. They believe the best way to guide children is to punish them when they do something wrong.

There are, however, other ways of thinking about discipline.

The authors of *The Discipline and Guidance of Children*[1] use this definition of **discipline:**

> *Discipline is the guidance of children's moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children to take responsibility for themselves when they are older.*

By contrast, **physical punishment** has been defined in a UNESCO publication as:

> *. . . an action taken by a parent, teacher or care-giver that is intended to cause physical pain or discomfort to a child. It is the application of punishment to the body. The purpose typically is to correct the child's behaviour and deter the child from repeating it.*[16]

We would probably all agree that the primary goals of discipline are responsible behaviour and self-control. Training, teaching and guiding are the most positive means of achieving these outcomes. This section will explain why:

- smacking or hitting is the least effective way of promoting responsible behaviour and self-control
- any form of physical punishment actually inhibits the achievement of these goals.

OUR CHILD-REARING GOALS

In her presentation on perspectives on discipline[17], Joan Durrant identifies the more specific goals that most parents would like to help their children achieve.

She compares the **short-term** goals of:

- obedience
- compliance

with the **long-term** goals that children need to achieve:

- problem-solving

- internalisation (absorbing and integrating principles, processes and values influenced by adult models)
- communication
- attachment and trust
- empathy and considerate behaviour
- respect for others
- confidence, motivation and mastery
- independence.

Discipline is necessary for children to reach these goals. Research tells us that the keys to effective discipline are not punishment and pain but **warmth** and **structure**.

Warmth is shown by parents who provide:

- emotional security
- unconditional love
- affection
- respect for the child's developmental level
- sensitivity to the child's needs
- empathy with the child's feelings.

In this climate of warmth, the child wants to please the parent, which contributes to their compliance and internalising of the parent's values.

Structure is created by parents who provide:

- clear guidelines for behaviour
- clearly communicated expectations
- clearly communicated reasons
- support to facilitate the child's success
- encouragement of the child's autonomy
- opportunities for the child to negotiate.

Similarly, the authors of The Discipline and Guidance of Children[1] present **key principles** of effective discipline:

- providing parental warmth and involvement
- clearly communicating expectations (telling the child what is acceptable and what the parent wants from them, rather than what the parent doesn't want)
- using explanation and reasoning
- providing rules, boundaries and limits
- allowing children to experience consequences (logical consequences like children cleaning up their own messes, and natural consequences like being late for school when they don't get up on time)
- being consistent (same behaviour – same consequence)
- structuring situations (managing the context – child proofing the environment, managing food and sleep, anticipating situations that are likely to cause bad behaviour, varying the tempo and routines, providing enough toys for each child, preparing for the supermarket, calming rituals, etc.).

By applying these principles parents are more likely to encourage compliance and cooperation in their children.

But what about a child running out onto the road?

Isn't it best to give them a sharp shock so they won't do it again? Smacking isn't necessary, but it's fine to pick them up or hold them back to keep them safe.

If a child is smacked in this situation, they may learn that running onto the road is wrong, but not why it's wrong or what to do instead.

It's hard for children, or adults for that matter, to learn anything constructive when they're in shock or upset or frightened. In the stress of that moment, the thinking part of the brain shuts down and tries to cope with the pain and the upset at being hit.

Remembering that the point of discipline is to promote responsible behaviour and self-control, hurting the child actually interferes with achieving these goals.

Dr Durrant reminds us again of the goal in this situation, which is compliance with a rule.

And how is compliance with the rule best achieved? Through:

- communication (the child knows the rule)
- understanding (the child knows the reason for the rule)
- problem-solving (the child learns signs of traffic)
- attachment and trust (the child believes the parent will protect them)
- empathy and considerate behaviour (the child internalises the ethics of caring for the safety others)
- respect (the child recognises the parent's knowledge and experience).

When parents apply these principles, children are more likely to comply, paving the way for:

- confidence, motivation and mastery (the child learns to cross the street safely)
- independence (the child crosses alone).

This all sounds so ideal

Any parent reading this may well feel that it all sounds like an ideal world where loving parents and happy cooperative children live together in constant peace and harmony. What about the real world? Can any parent live up to these admittedly sound but ideal principles all of the time? Even when parents are being positive and encouraging, children don't always respond positively.

Sometimes a parent will get a fright if they see their child doing something very dangerous, and will react impulsively. And sometimes a child will test a parent's rules, expectations and patience – to the limit. There will be times when most parents run out of tolerance, energy or creativity, and will get mad, shout, or want to punish the child. That's natural. No parent can be perfect all of the time.

When a parent falls short of the ideal or fails to apply the positive principles, the best they can do is to acknowledge it. It's another example of modelling 'discipline'. The child hears their parent apologising, and observes that when adults make mistakes they take responsibility for their own behaviour, acknowledge the effects on others, and they try to make amends. What better model for a child to copy!

IN SUMMARY

- Children do need discipline, but discipline and physical punishment are not the same thing.
- The purpose of discipline is to promote responsible behaviour and self-control.
- Physical punishment is not a form of discipline because:
  - it does not help towards encouraging compliance
  - it does not create a climate of emotional warmth or provide the structure needed for other important life-skills to be learned.
- Children will become increasingly self-disciplined in response to their parents providing them with a blend of love, limits and liberty.

Reason 7

HITTING IS NOT NECESSARY TO CONTROL CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR.

'Sometimes parents just don't know what else to do.'

INTRODUCTION

Positive principles are all very well but sometimes children don't obey, don't cooperate, and don't seem at all interested in pleasing anyone.

What can parents do to discipline their children in ways that provide clear rules and limits, and that make them follow reasonable directions without having to apply force or laying a harsh hand on them?

Sometimes a child will refuse to eat their dinner, just won't go to bed, will keep getting up, go slow in the morning, give cheek, provoke their little brother or sister, have temper tantrums, and do anything to avoid doing their chores or their homework.

What is a parent supposed to do then?

Withdrawing privileges and 'time out' sound good in principle but what if the child continues being defiant or just won't calm down? What happens if they keep yelling and start throwing things? Surely there should be some consequences. Shouldn't they be, well, punished?

Not by hitting or smacking, nor by name-calling, yelling or blaming. All of these are ineffective and potentially harmful. But when a child misbehaves, a stressed parent will often feel stuck and short of good ideas. It's so easy to resort to old reactions.

At times like these, it's hard for parents to recognise the enormous power they have to influence their children, and the numerous strategies they can use to discipline and guide them, preferably before things get to the stage of pure power struggle.

This section will present the keys to positive discipline:

- increasing parent self-awareness
- choosing a parenting style
- understanding child development and having realistic expectations of children
- using effective methods to guide and manage children's behaviour.

Information about where to find further helpful parent education and resources is provided on pages 48 and 49.

Parents need to know what they can do to increase the chances of their children becoming 'little angels' – at least most of the time. A warm, loving family environment is a very good start.

THE KEYS TO POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Increasing parent self-awareness

Under stress, most parents will find it hard to avoid acting in ways they learned from their own parents, sometimes copying the very behaviours they were determined not to repeat. This is sometimes called **reactive parenting**. Of course most parents also adopt good models, principles and habits from the former generation – but often unconsciously.

The preferred model is **conscious parenting** (see *SKIP – Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents*).[18]

> *Conscious parenting means becoming deliberate and intentional about what we want for the children we care for. It's making choices about what we bring from our own families and what we choose to leave out.*

There are some helpful questions that parents can answer to raise their own consciousness about what might be influencing the ways they respond to their children.

- What did you appreciate about what your parents did for you?
- What memories do you have of your family upbringing?
- What are some of the good things that you would like to repeat with your own children?
- What are some aspects of your upbringing that you don't want to see repeated?
- What kind of parent do you want to be and why?
- What are some of the things you'd like to do differently?

Each parent is also likely to adopt a parenting style, either following the pattern of their family of origin, or perhaps, reacting against it.

Choosing a parenting style

There are three common parenting styles: **authoritarian, permissive** and **authoritative**. Parents often find it helpful to identify their predominant style in considering changes.

The **authoritarian** parent makes strict rules that are rigidly enforced and requires unquestioning obedience and respect for authority. This can be an attempt to teach important family values and promote achievement in life. Punishment is often used.

The **permissive** parent makes few rules, and imposes few boundaries or limits in an attempt to avoid conflict or upsetting the child. This is often because the parent wants to raise their children differently from the way they were raised, and to lower the tension in the home. They will tend to give in to their children's demands and hope that tomorrow will be a better day!

The **authoritative** parent is firm about expectations and sets limits, but also gives reasons, responds to the child's needs and listens to the child's views.

Discipline is provided through a blend of positive feedback and encouragement, guidance, allowing the child to experience logical consequences, and disapproval of bad behaviour.

Authoritative parenting is of course the ideal approach, but each parent will adopt a style that is in accord with their own personality and values.

Understanding child development

What can look like naughty behaviour in a child is so often normal behaviour for their age and stage. The parent who understands this is much less likely to feel the urge to punish.

There is a lot of information about child development, which is helpful for parents to know about (see the references at the end of this section). The following examples, drawn from *Ages and Stages (SKIP)*[18], are just a small selection of the behaviours of pre-schoolers that are age-appropriate but which can be misinterpreted as naughtiness.

- **Between 18 months and two years:** Toddlers want to do things for themselves and want things here and now. They don't like change and are easily frustrated and bored. They start to test limits as well as learn how to talk, run and climb. Temper tantrums ('small child overload') might start around two.
- **Two to three years:** They start to talk a lot, have lots of energy, and enjoy noise. They develop definite likes and dislikes with food, clothes, toys, etc. Some two year olds get bossy and jealous.
- **Three to four years:** Around three-and-a-half a child might have an unsettled time when they are feeling insecure about starting at kindergarten or playcentre. Around four they become very energetic, and might be rough, impatient and loud.
- **Four to five years:** Children at this age are likely to be more cooperative, will try to be good, and will play more happily with others, but they will also tell the odd lie and won't like admitting they are wrong. There will also be arguments.

And now for some practical ideas.

Using effective methods to guide and manage children's behaviour

The following principles and practices that encourage good behaviour have been adapted from *Choose to Hug, Not to Smack.*[19]

12 PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES THAT ENCOURAGE GOOD BEHAVIOUR

1. Give positive attention

- Say positive things (more than 80% of the time).
- Be affectionate and use humour and surprise.
- Avoid put downs.
- Tell someone else – report the good news in the child's hearing.

2. Distract

- With younger children, it's better to focus attention on something else or change activity.

3. Ignore minor unwanted behaviour

- Let the little things go.
- Intervene only when the behaviour is destructive.
- Ignore cheekiness and rudeness.
- Be cool until the child redeems him or herself.

4. Make cooperation fun

- Help them start and finish things.
- Turn boring activities into games.

5. Disapprove of the behaviour, not the child

- It is better to say: 'I'm upset when you pull the cat's tail. It's a mean thing to do because it hurts the cat.', than: 'You are a mean boy pulling the cat's tail.'

6. Help children feel good

- Avoid going over and over mistakes/ shortcomings.
- Don't shame or tease them.
- Let them save face, e.g., 'That was a bit heavy for you. Next time ask for help.'

7. Make 'time in'

- Put aside 15-20 minutes a day to be alone with your child doing something enjoyable.
- If the child misbehaves during this time turn away. Tell them you'll come back again later when their behaviour is better.

8. Prepare ahead

- Avoid putting the child through frustrating experiences like long telephone calls.
- Anticipate needs – take toys and food.
- Give them attention before you need to be busy.

9. Give children choices where possible

- Some things are not negotiable: 'It is your bedtime in half an hour'.
- Giving options helps them to co-operate: 'There are three jobs. I'll do two. Which one do you want to do?'

10. Give children reasons

- 'That programme is after your bedtime and you get tired at school if you don't have enough sleep.'

11. Provide real-life lessons and logical consequences

- Real-life lesson: If they miss their homework the teacher will get cross.
- Logical consequences: 'I can't read the book to you because you've ripped it.'
- Only make threats you can enforce. If you say 'no treats' don't give in to the nagging that may follow.

12. Reward good behaviour

- Notice and comment when the child is kind, helpful, shares with others, manages their frustration, and complies with instructions and requests.

And what about 'time-out'?

This is a controversial issue. Some parent advisors recommend this and others do not. Most experts agree though that:

- it should not be used too often
- the child should not be locked in
- the child should not be restrained
- it should not be used in a way that leaves the child feeling distraught, rejected or abandoned.

It may be helpful:

- for the parent to take a breathing space to calm down, to take some deep breaths and stop the situation getting out of control
- to give the child time to calm down, to think about how they might make amends, and to prepare themselves to behave better
- to have a 'thinking chair' or another space in the house
- to give the child either the instruction on how many minutes they are to be away or the instruction 'Come back and join us when you've calmed down'.

And what if nothing works?

Sometimes negative patterns of interaction between a parent and a child can become very ingrained, or the child's behaviour can become a very strong habit, or sometimes a child misbehaves because something is seriously upsetting them. These are times when seeking professional help may be the best way to make changes. The child's teacher, doctor, nurse or local family support agency may know where to go to for help.

There is no perfect one-size-fits-all solution to managing children. It is helpful to have a range of options available. Being a parent is always a learning, growing experience.

TO PARENTS WHO WANT TO STOP THE OLD HABIT OF HITTING

Congratulations for choosing to be parents who use positive discipline. Here are some hints that will help.

- Tell your children.
- Let everyone in the family know and seek their support.
- Let your children know what you expect from them.
- Be clear about the rules that are most important to you and stick with these. It's OK to let some of the small things go.
- Realise that you can adapt the way you help a child to behave well to suit his or her age and personality.
- Find a way of calming down or go somewhere safe in the house when you're stressed.

Your children will be impressed.

You are taking that step towards creating a less violent society.

Where to Find Further Parent Education

TV Programmes

- *Little Angels*
  see website: www.bbc.co.uk/parenting

Books

- *Understanding Children's Development* by Anne B. Smith. (4th Edition) Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, NZ. 1998.
- *Parent Craft* by Ken & Elizabeth Mellor. Finch Publishing, Sydney. 1999.
- *Positive Parenting* by Kate Birch. Reed, Auckland. 1991.
- *Of Course I Love You, Now Go to your Room* by Diane Levy. Random House, Auckland. 2002
- *Kids are Worth It* by Barbara Coloroso. (Revised Edition.) Harper Collins, USA. 2002.
- *The Secret of Happy Children* by Steve Biddulph. Harper Collins, Australia. 2004.
- *Parenting From the Inside Out: How a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive* by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell. Penguin, USA. 2004.

Magazines

- *Parents Inc. Magazine*
- *Little Treasures (NZ) Magazine*
- *Littlies Magazine*
- *Kiwi Parent*

Parent Education Courses

- Plunket Society (www.plunket.org.nz)
- Parents Centre (www.parentscentre.org.nz)
- Parents Inc. (www.parentsinc.org.nz)
- Play Centre (www.playcentre.org.nz)
- Barnardos (www.barnardos.org.nz)
- Kohanga Reo (www.kohanga.ac.nz)
- Kindergartens (www.nzkindergarten.org.nz)
- Jigsaw Family Services (formerly Child Abuse Prevention Services) (www.jigsaw.org.nz)
- Adult education courses at community colleges and high schools

Resources

- SKIP Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents – pamphlets and other resources on many aspects of child care and management. Also a video on children's views about discipline and punishment. (www.familyservices.govt.nz)
- National Online Directory for information on parent education resources and programmes. (www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory)
- *Choose to Hug, Not to Smack* – booklet produced by EPOCH (see website: www.epochnz.org.nz) and The Office of the Children's Commissioner (www.occ.org.nz)
- Pamphlets on parenting are also available from The Office of the Children's Commissioner. (www.occ.org.nz)

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5. *Children's views on corporal punishment.* http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/frame.html

6. *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Copies are available in a number of languages from the Office of the Children's Commissioner, PO Box 5610, Lambton Quay, Wellington, telephone 04-471-1410, call free 0800-224-453, website: www.occ.org.nz

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17. Durrant. J.E. (2004) *International Perspectives on Discipline.* Presentation at a UNICEF/Institute of Public Policy (AUT) forum in Auckland, June 2004.

18. SKIP Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents – pamphlets and other resources (e.g a video) on many aspects of child care and management e.g., *Ages and Stages, Tips on Stress, Tantrums, Supermarket Survival.* See website: www.familyservices.govt.nz

19. EPOCH and OCC *Choose to hug, not to smack.*
See EPOCH website: www.epochnz.org.nz
See The Office of the Children's Commissioner website: www.occ.org.nz

Raising children to become happy, well adjusted and cooperative adults is challenging. Parents want to do a good job, but often don't know how to be the best parents they could be.

This booklet not only gives seven very good reasons not to hit children, it also shows how they can be guided to become responsible adults by using a range of approaches that millions of parents have learned to use in other countries, and increasingly here in New Zealand. The principles of positive parenting and practical suggestions for parents are included.

It is written for people who support and guide parents and for parents themselves.

By breaking the habit of hitting, and adopting more positive practices, we can unequivocally show our children the love we feel for them, and the respect they deserve. It is also the step we can each take towards creating a less violent society.

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She is the author of:

Love in the Real World: Starting and keeping close relationships

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How Money Comes Between Us: Common family problems, creative solutions

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