

Twenty good reasons to stop a bad practice

By Jordan Riak

Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education
P.O. Box 1033, Alamo, CA 94507-7033

Visit "Project NoSpank" on the Web
at www.nospank.net
and "The Hitting Stops Here!"
at www.thehittingstopshere.com

Reprint this page at www.nospank.net/20eng.pdf

Print "Veinte razones suficientes para abandonar una
práctica nociva" at
www.nospank.net/20span.pdf

1) Schools that use corporal punishment (CP) tend to have poorer academic achievement, more vandalism, truancy, pupil violence and dropout than schools that don't use CP.

2) Because child abuse and its effects are becoming better understood by more people, teachers who hit children run an ever-increasing risk of criminal prosecutions and civil suits.

3) Teachers who use CP tend to spend more time "disciplining" and less time teaching than teachers who don't use CP.

4) No creditable teachers' training curriculum includes instruction in how to hit people, and virtually all acknowledged leaders in the fields of education and child development consider the use of CP, whether by teachers or parents, counterproductive and unprofessional.

5) The overwhelming majority of teachers don't hit their pupils. Many find it difficult or impossible to work in settings where children have become conditioned to, and expect, violent management by adults. For this reason schools that use CP risk losing their most able teachers and becoming increasingly punitive, demoralized and ineffective.

6) The use of CP creates feelings of antagonism between children and authority figures and causes victims to lose trust not only in the hitter, but in the institution that allows such treatment. This can easily overwhelm a child's natural inclination to learn and cooperate, replacing them with avoidance behaviors or the urge to "get even."

7) In schools where CP is permitted, there typically is little or no incentive for teachers to learn more humane, effective and up-to-date methods of pupil management.

8) By undermining self-respect, CP plants the seeds of future self-destructive and antisocial behaviors such as lying, stealing, fighting, running away, delinquency, chemical dependency and reckless driving. Ironically, CP is often used to punish some of the very behaviors it causes.

9) Children with special needs often are corporally punished because of poor performance or their inability to conform. Such mistreatment serves only to compound their original disabilities.

10) CP tends to diminish or destroy the natural feelings of empathy that are in every child. Children who repeatedly witness their peers being hurt, while they are powerless to intervene, tend to become indifferent to human suffering and injustice.

11) Punished children behave out of fear and rarely learn to govern their own conduct. Children develop moral judgment, self-control, responsibility and consideration for others by imitating the good example of the significant adults in their lives.

12) CP teaches submissiveness. Children are expected to cooperate in the act and usually do. This conditions them to become easy targets for predators who molest or exploit children sexually. One cannot reasonably expect a child who obediently bends over for a smacking on Monday to be able to say "no" to a molester on Tuesday.

13) Most perpetrators and victims of spousal battery were routinely exposed to CP as children - receiving it, witnessing it or both. The seeds of domestic violence are planted early by corporal punishers.

14) CP can cause serious physical damage. Hitting a child's buttocks can cause injuries to the muscles, the sciatic nerve, pelvis, genitals or spinal column. Hitting a child's hands can injure delicate bones, joints and ligaments resulting in reduced dexterity or permanent impairment. Shaking a child can cause whiplash injury, brain damage, blindness or death.

15) Medical science has long recognized a direct link between violent punishment in early childhood, particularly battering to the buttocks, and the subsequent development of deviant sexual behaviors.

16) Any line of work, including teaching and parenting, that permits persons in authority to inflict pain on others, will attract some people who are mentally disturbed and who enjoy inflicting pain. Such people will do it at every opportunity and will even create opportunities to do it because they are addicted to the feelings they experience when they are hurting somebody.

17) The very existence of CP as an option tends to legitimate other degrading and humiliating treatment of children. Where children's physical integrity is violated, it is illogical to expect that their psychological integrity to fare any better.

18) Children of poverty are corporally punished far more frequently than children of the middle or affluent classes. Such unequal treatment further handicaps and discourages the very children who most need to be encouraged. It helps plant the illusion in the minds of all children that certain people are inferior, that they deserve to be beaten and when they drop out of school, it's their own fault. CP is a powerful reinforcer of bigotry, class discrimination and collective hatred.

19) Some children interpret the degrading and humiliating use of CP as a license for them to do the same. Thus, CP promotes bullying, cruelty and scapegoating among children.

20) Schools are role models for their communities. They should set the highest possible standard. When teacher violence is condoned, abusive parents and other abusive adults feel exonerated. CP in the schools promotes child abuse in the general community.