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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## **Debates over Spanking<sup>1</sup>**

*Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Many parents spank their children as a way to teach right and wrong and wonder whether this is best for their children. Likewise, among child development researchers there has been a lot of debate about whether physical punishment is the best way to discipline a child. Spanking does produce immediate results—it stops the child's misbehavior.

Spanking may not always be harmful unless it is excessive, and some professionals suggest some guidelines for calm, controlled ways of spanking that may effectively stop misbehavior (Baumrind, 1996).

Other studies show that spanking may work in the short run, but over time, the parent may have to spank harder and longer to get the child to stop misbehaving, and the child may misbehave more (Grogan-Kaylor, 2004). In addition, children who are spanked may not learn how to control themselves based on choices about right and wrong. And sadly, when parents spank out of anger, physical punishment may escalate and injure the child (Gershoff, 2002).

Parents can choose from many ways of disciplining and guiding their child, such as time-outs or taking away privileges. Parents can also use reasoning; they can explain to their child what they did wrong and what they could do differently. They can set a good

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2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, and Executive Producer, Family Album Radio, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

example by showing the child how to behave appropriately. Most of all, parents can create a positive climate in the home by praising and encouraging good behavior and giving a child attention and love. If you are having difficulty with your child's behavior, seek professional help for finding the best ways to guide your growing child.

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