

Spanking or creative parenting



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The little girl really didn't appear to be doing anything wrong. I had seen her with her mother throughout the day at the shopping center. She was talkative and energetic when I saw her. She was pushing a stroller with a little boy inside while her mother pushed a cart loaded with groceries. The last time I saw her was in an aisle full of toys. She had stopped to pick up a doll. Her mother was calling her to come along and the child seemed not to hear. Suddenly, without warning, the mother quickly strode up to the little girl and gave her three hard smacks on the bottom. She didn't even speak with the little girl. She turned and returned to her cart. The child quickly replaced the doll and maneuvered the stroller back beside the mother as she strode away. I saw a tiny hand reach up to wipe away what I assumed to be a tear from her face. I felt sorry for the child and was left wondering why the mother hit her daughter in this instance. Reflecting on the scene, I have come to the conclusion that what I witnessed was wrong for several reasons. There is almost always a better way to discipline a child than by spanking. One reason spanking in this situation is ineffective parenting is the punishment did not have anything to do with the infraction. The consequence of spanking didn't really connect the child to the misbehavior. A better technique to use would have been for the mother to get the child's attention by using her voice. Once she got her attention, then she could have signaled to the girl it was time to go. If the girl didn't respond, slowly walking away from the child would have sent the message that if you don't come now you will be left behind. This is naturally motivating for a child because they usually do not want to be separated from a parent. Another reason spanking is not an effective way to discipline children is it models behavior that we wouldn't want children to repeat. I am sympathetic

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to the mother in the scenario described. Maybe her daughter was on her last nerve. Maybe the mother wasn't feeling well or had just lost her job.

Regardless of the reason the mother chose to strike her child, the message sent to the child is that when you are upset it is acceptable to lash out at others. She learned that hitting others is a form of communication. It is a way of getting people to do what you want. I think all of us would agree that hitting others is not a great way to communicate.

A final reason I feel hitting in this situation was wrong is the lack of verbal communication between the mother and daughter. The little girl didn't even know why she was hit. You could see this on her face. The mother didn't even have the courtesy to explain to the girl what she had done wrong. The confusion that occurs for a child when they are spanked by a parent can be damaging. Children look for love and protection from their parents. When they are suddenly spanked for no apparent reason, then they trust their parents less and feel that their parents love them less as well.

In conclusion, I feel that spanking as a form of discipline is not a very effective way to teach children how to act. I do feel that spanking can be effective, but these instances are truly rare. When a child's actions put them or someone else in grave danger, a physical reprimand may be necessary to punctuate the seriousness of their actions. But for everything else modeling good behavior and logically explaining what the child should be doing are much better ways to parent.