



Child abuse pediatrician to offer alternatives to physical discipline

by Carla Kemp, Senior Editor

Editor's note: *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

Nineteen states allow public schools to use corporal punishment to discipline students in preschool through 12th grade.

Furthermore, 76% of men and 65% of women agree that sometimes it's necessary to give a child "a good, hard spanking" as a form of punishment, according to a 2015 survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

"The argument that parents always throw out is 'This is what happened to me and I turned out OK, so this is going to be how I'm going to discipline my child,'" said Ryan D. Brown, M.D., FAAP, who is board certified in child abuse pediatrics and is a member of the AAP Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Dr. Brown will discuss how to counter that argument and educate parents on the use of other forms of discipline during a session titled "Creating Safe Places: A Look at Corporal Punishment and No Hit Zones (F3099)" from 3-3:45 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5, in room W304GH of the convention center.

Numerous studies have shown that children who are spanked are at increased risk of negative behavioral, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional outcomes. The AAP released a revised policy statement today titled *Effective Discipline to Raise Healthy Children*, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3112>. It recommends that parents be encouraged to use positive methods of discipline and avoid punishment and verbal abuse. (See article at <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/11/05/discipline110518>.)

Spanking may stop a child's bad behavior in the short term, Dr. Brown said. However, pediatricians can talk with parents about how physical punishment can cause long-term problems and offer alternative approaches to discipline that go beyond the ubiquitous time out. Dr. Brown will provide some strategies based on a child's development.

"It's really about education," said Dr. Brown, associate clinical professor, University of Oklahoma College of Medicine/The Children's Hospital at OU Medical Center.

Dr. Brown also will discuss No Hit Zones, a concept created in 2005 by Lolita M. McDavid, M.D., FAAP, to promote healthy relationships and safe environments in pediatric hospitals. Since then, No Hit Zones have expanded to other settings where hitting is not tolerated as a form of child punishment, during sibling conflicts or between adults. Instead, No Hit Zones promote prevention, support during early signs of distress and positive ways to handle conflict.

When it comes to corporal punishment, Dr. Brown says times must change.

"I don't think we're getting softer," he said, "I think we're getting smarter with our discipline."

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