

# Positive Parenting

## An alternative to physical punishment

### What is Physical Punishment?

There are lots of types of physical punishment. It can mean smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking. But there can be other types too. It isn't possible to give a set list because it can be anything where a child is punished using physical force.

Research suggests that any type of physical punishment could be harmful to children.

#### How do I discipline my child?

Every child needs discipline; it is an essential part of good parenting. However, discipline is very different to physical punishment.

Discipline is about providing a child with **boundaries, guidance and support** so they learn appropriate behaviour.

**Physical punishment is not a necessary part of disciplining children.**

It may look like it works because children often stop what they are doing when they are smacked, but physical punishment of children is not effective in improving children's behaviour and it doesn't help children learn about self-control or appropriate behaviour. Physical punishment can:

- Hurt a child
- Make a child feel fear, anger, sadness and confusion
- Give children the message that violence is ok and is an appropriate response to strong feelings
- Be associated with negative outcomes for children

#### How do I discipline my child without using physical punishment?

There are many ways to discipline a child without using physical punishment.

- Sometimes just distracting a young child in a challenging situation is enough to reduce a problem behaviour
- With children over 3 years old you can use a consequence instead of physical punishment, such as removing a toy or activity for a short time.
- For older children and teenagers, knowing what the biggest impact would have is important, such as removing access to electronics, spending time with friends or loss of pocket money for a set period of time
- By learning to recognise and manage our own feelings and emotions, it may mean that we can calm situations before they escalate. For example, by staying calm, taking a few breaths or even walking away, you give your child a great example of how to behave.

### Positive Parenting

- Give genuine praise for positive (good) behavior.
- Have clear family rules suitable for your child's age and ability.
- Plan ahead for times where children tend to behave in challenging ways (e.g. take a snack or a toy on shopping trips).
- Try and think about what's going on under the surface of tricky behaviors — is your child Hungry, Lonely or Tired (HALT)?
- Connect a feeling to the behavior e.g. 'I think you are throwing the toys because you are cross, but we don't hurt people'.
- Develop a routine that works for your family.
- Model the behavior you want to see—a child won't understand that hitting or shouting is not allowed if that is what they see adults do.