

Training Session on Alternatives to Corporal Punishment



Produced by the
Gender Research and Advocacy Project,
Legal Assistance Centre



Aims and objectives

For many parents, the use of corporal punishment is a way of life. It is often the only discipline technique used by parents. They might not even be able to think of another method of discipline as they assume that any other method of discipline would be ineffective.

The aim of this session is to teach children that there are alternatives to corporal punishment. The training session will also help teach children that violence is not the solution to their problems.

This training session may also help children to identify themselves if they are being abused. In these cases it might be necessary to visit the police or a Woman and Child Protection Unit, or to contact an organisation such as Lifeline (061 232221)

Target group	Children aged between 7-14
Duration	2 -3 hours

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Start the session with a game:

Do like this, Do like that...

1. Stand at the front of the room where everyone can see you.
2. Ask the participants to copy your physical movements whenever you say, "Do like this." For example, you might touch your leg or jump up and down, and the participants should do the same.
3. When you say, "Do like that," the participants should not copy your movements.

The first time someone copies you when you say "Do like that," ask the group whether it is right that they should be beaten because they got it wrong. Tell the group that it is an easy mistake, the game is designed to catch you out. It would not be right to punish someone, particularly with violence, for getting it wrong.

Many parents often use corporal punishment in day-to-day life when someone makes a small mistake. This is not fair.

Tell the group that in this session they will be learning about the different ways children can be punished. A punishment is not meant to injure a person, it is meant to teach the difference between right and wrong.



Use a story to settle the children down:

Photocopy the illustration on page 3 for the children to colour in

Sam the Zebra goes gardening

Sam the Zebra was very excited. He was going to visit his grandmother and help her with chores in the garden. His brother and sister were too young to go and Sam felt very important and grown up. He was so excited that he danced around the room kicking his heels in the air. Suddenly he kicked his legs a bit too high and knocked his mother's favourite vase onto the floor. It shattered into a hundred pieces.

Sam's mother came rushing into the room. When she saw what had happened, she looked very angry. "Sam, you have been very naughty" she said. "I told you not to run around inside. You must go and sit in the corner and think about what you have done for ten minutes." Sam had broken something very precious and he needed to think about why his behaviour had caused it to happen.

After ten minutes Sam came to his mother and told her that he was very sorry. He would not run inside again because it could break things. His mother accepted his apology and sent him to visit his grandmother.

Sam's grandmother set him to work in the garden straight away. She told him to pull out all the weeds but not to touch the flowers. Sam tried to follow his grandmother's instructions about which plants he should pull out (the weeds) and which plants he should leave in the garden (the flowers). But it was very difficult because his grandmother had not explained it very well and they all looked the same.

When Sam's grandmother came to check on him one hour later, she found that he had pulled out all the flowers and left all the weeds in the garden. She was very angry. She started to beat and smack Sam. Sam cried and cried and said that he was sorry. "It was an accident"

he sobbed, but his grandmother did not listen and kept on hitting him. When she eventually stopped, Sam had bruises all over his body. His grandmother told him to go home and he walked slowly back to his house. He could not go very fast because his body hurt a lot. When he got home, he went to his mother and told her what had happened. She told him that his grandmother had been very wrong to punish him like that. She sent Sam to bed to rest and went to visit the grandmother to tell her never ever to hit children like that again.



What is corporal punishment?

Corporal punishment can be defined as the practice of smacking, slapping, spanking or beating children for disciplinary purposes.

Corporal punishment can affect self-esteem by making the victim feel scared, sad or unhappy.

Corporal punishment is not a good way to punish a person. To understand this, we will look at what it feels like to receive corporal punishment.



How do you feel when you are hit?

Ask the group the following questions:

1. What does the word "beaten" mean?
2. Where on your body are you usually beaten?
3. In what place are you usually beaten (i.e. at home, in public)?
4. What does it feel like to be beaten?
5. How do you feel after you have been beaten?
6. When you are big, do you think that you will smack your children?

Additional activity

If you have extra time, ask the children to draw an answer to one of the questions in this section



Play a game to lighten the mood.

The game below is meant to be fun but it is also looking at children's attitudes to corporal punishment.

Word association game

In this game, when you are told a word, you have to say the first word that comes into your head when you hear it (i.e. grass → green; or chocolate → cake).

You have to keep going around the group, thinking of words that are associated with the last word spoken (i.e. grass → green → vegetables → carrots → orange → sun → sunglasses → fashionable → shops → money...)

Start with a new word when people get stuck.

Use the following words as starters:

Cup, hat, beat, grass, hit, potato, book, school, smack, blanket, bed, chair, punish.



The long term consequences of corporal punishment

The aim of this activity is to teach the children that corporal punishment has long term effects.

Do you agree or disagree?

Place 3 signs around the room: Agree, Disagree, Don't know

Read the following statements and ask the children to go to whichever sign they think says what they think about the statement. Discuss each statement with the children

- **Physical punishment teaches children that violence is OK**
(Agree. Studies have shown that children exposed to violence are more likely to be violent as adults.)
- **Physical punishment does not teach children the reasons for behaving.**
(Agree. Physical punishment just scares children.)
- **It is OK for parents to punish their children by beating them until they bleed**
(Disagree. This is violence.)
- **Physical punishment can turn into physical abuse**
(Agree. Sometimes parents can lose control and become abusive. This is why people should not use corporal punishment.)
- **Physical punishment makes children less likely to hit other children**
(Disagree. Studies have shown that physical punishment often makes children more likely to be aggressive to other children.)

- **Children deserve respect. This includes a right not to be beaten when they do something wrong**
(Agree. The Namibian Constitution, the highest law of the land says this.)

The difference between corporal punishment and other types of punishment

Sometimes a child will need to be punished because what they are doing might put them or someone else in danger. Or it might be that what they are doing is wrong. The aim of a punishment should be to allow child to understand that what they did was wrong.

Corporal punishment does not tell children why what they did was wrong, so they might continue to do it. Explain to the children that there is an alternative to corporal punishment.

Ask the children to give examples of what type of disobedience requires discipline i.e.

- Playing in a busy street full of cars
- Hurting somebody
- Breaking possessions
- Being rude
- Playing rather than doing schoolwork or simple chores

Explain to the children that parents should discipline their children with love and care. Through good discipline, adults help children to behave better. Adults should praise children when they do something right and reprimand them when they do something wrong, but adults should not hurt them.

Ask the children to think about methods of discipline that do not involve smacking, slapping, spanking, or beating. If you have a number of adults who can attend this

session, ask some of the older children to leave the group and interview the adults on better ways of discipline.

One way to help the discussion is to ask the children to think of an example of a person in their lives who is a good role model when it comes to discipline.

- How does this person discipline children?

Examples of alternatives to corporal punishment:

Verbal reprimand	The parent explains what the child has done wrong.
Time out	Ask the child to stop doing whatever he/she is doing and calm down. <i>(This is what Sam's mother asked him to do.)</i> This might involve sitting in a specified place for a period of time. The specified place is sometimes called the naughty step.
Removal of rewards/pleasures	As a punishment, the child is prevented from making a visit to his/her friends or has to go to bed early.
Solve the problem	If something has been damaged, the child could be asked to mend it.
Take responsibility for the action	Sometimes, making a child own up to an action can be punishment enough (i.e. if a child stole something from a shop, make the child visit the manager, return the item and apologise).

Some children may still think that corporal punishment is acceptable. Explain to them that studies have shown that corporal punishment actually increases

undesirable behaviour and is less and less effective the more it is used. Corporal punishment can also lead to a poor relationship between the parent and child.

Additional activity for older children

Ask the children to design a cartoon script. Half of the group should design a story about a child who receives corporal punishment. The other half should design a story about a child who is disciplined using alternatives to corporal punishment.

Summary

Finish the session by telling the children that there is a difference between corporal punishment and other types of punishment. Corporal punishment does not solve the problem, it can actually make more problems instead.

All children have the right to respect, and this includes not to be punished excessively with corporal punishment. Tell the child that if they want to know more information or want to ask for help, they should speak to one of the leaders at the end.

