

APA RESOLUTION on Physical Discipline of Children by Parents

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The goal of physical discipline is to reduce the recurrence of children's undesirable behaviors and to increase the frequency of children's desirable behaviors. Although parents' decision to use physical discipline may be related to cultural, historical, and contextual factors, existing research demonstrates that not only is customary physical discipline an ineffective disciplinary strategy to achieve compliance (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016a; Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005), it also potentially harms children (Ferguson, 2013; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016a; Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). Use of physical discipline predicts increases—not decreases—in children's behavior problems over time, even after race, gender, and family socioeconomic status have been statistically controlled (e.g., Alampay et al., 2017; Berlin et al., 2009; Campbell, Pierce, Moore, Marakovitz, & Newby, 1996; Cohen & Brook, 1995; Coley, Kull, & Carrano, 2014; Flouri & Midouhas, 2017; Grogan-Kaylor, 2004, 2005a; Gromoske & Maguire-Jack, 2012; Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Ma & Grogan-Kaylor, 2017; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2015; Maguire-Jack, Gromoske, & Berger, 2012; Maneta, White, & Mezzacappa, 2017; Olson, Ewon Choe, & Sameroff, 2017; Olson, Lopez-Duran, Lunkenheimer, Chang, & Sameroff, 2011; Pagani et al., 2004; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Piché, Huynh, Clément, & Durrant, 2016; Stormshak et al., 2000; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992). Additionally, meta-analytic reviews have found physical discipline use to be linked with a host of undesirable behavioral, social, and biological outcomes (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016a; Paolucci & Violato, 2004). This body of work has utilized a variety of strong research designs; has adopted multiple measures to operationalize constructs like "behavior problems"; has increased validity; and has examined diverse samples, enhancing generalizability to different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, and children from different communities and socio-economic backgrounds (Gershoff et al., 2018). Alternative parenting approaches that teach positive parenting skills and deliver information intended to foster attitude change have demonstrated their effectiveness in helping parents raise their kids more effectively—in line with their goals—and to reduce children's undesirable behavior (Ateah, 2013; Beauchaine, Webster-Stratton, & Reid, 2005; Bugental, Ellerson, Lin, Rainey, Kokotovic, & O'Hara, 2002; Burkhart, Knox, & Brockmyer, 2013; Canfield et al., 2015; Chavis et al., 2013; Dubowitz, Feigelman, Lane, & Kim, 2009; Durrant et al., 2014; Gershoff, Ansari, Purtell, & Sexton, 2016; Gross et al., 2009; Holland & Holden, 2016; Knox, Burkhart, & Howe, 2011; Leijten, Raaijmakers, Orobio de Castro, van den Ban, & Matthys, 2017; Letarte, Normandeau, & Allard, 2010; Love et al., 2005; Portwood, Lambert, Abrams, & Nelson,

2011; Puma et al., 2012; Scholer, Hamilton, Johnson, & Scott, 2010; St. George, Wilson, McDaniel, & Alia, 2016; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Beauchaine, 2011).

WHEREAS physical discipline by parents has been associated with heightened risk for harm to children's mental health, as well as to their cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional development (Bender et al., 2007; Bugental, Martorell, & Barraza, 2003; Coley et al., 2014; Dobbs, Smith, & Taylor, 2006; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016a; Gershoff, Sattler, & Ansari, 2018; Ma, 2016; Maguire-Jack et al., 2012; Maneta et al., 2017; Okuzono, Fujiwara, Kato, & Kawachi, 2017; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Sheu, Polcari, Anderson, & Teicher, 2010; Tomoda et al., 2009; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996; Vittrup & Holden, 2010; Zulauf, Sokolovsky, Grabell, & Olson, 2018);

WHEREAS physical discipline is associated with increased adverse outcomes for children across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups and across community contexts (Aucoin, Frick, & Bodin, 2006; Bodovski & Youn, 2010; Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, Pipes McAdoo, & Garcia Coll, 2001; Coley et al., 2014; Ellison, Musick, & Holden, 2011; Fish, Amerikaner, & Lucas, 2007; Flouri & Midouhas, 2017; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016b; Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Davis-Kean, & Sameroff, 2012; Grogan-Kaylor, 2004, 2005b; Hendricks, Lansford, Deater-Deckard, & Bornstein, 2014; Lau, Litrownik, Newton, Black, & Everson, 2006; Ma, 2016; Ma & Grogan-Kaylor, 2017; Ma, Grogan-Kaylor & Lee, 2018; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2012; McLoyd & Smith, 2002; Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Whiteside-Mansell, Bradley, & McKelvey, 2009; Vittrup & Holden, 2010; Wang & Kenny, 2014);

WHEREAS research indicates that physical discipline is not effective in achieving parents' long-term goals of decreasing aggressive and defiant behavior in children or of promoting regulated and socially competent behavior in children (Alampay et al., 2017; Berlin et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 1996; Cohen & Brook, 1995; Coley, Kull, & Carrano, 2014; Flouri & Midouhas, 2017; Grogan-Kaylor, 2004, 2005a; Gromoske & Maguire-Jack, 2012; Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Ma & Grogan-Kaylor, 2017; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2015; Maguire-Jack, Gromoske, & Berger, 2012; Maneta, White, & Mezzacappa, 2017; Olson et al., 2017; Olson et al., 2011; Pagani et al., 2004;

Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Piché et al., 2016; Stormshak et al., 2000; Weiss et al., 1992);

WHEREAS the research on the adverse outcomes associated with physical discipline indicates that any perceived short-term benefits of physical discipline do not outweigh the detriments of this form of discipline (Alampay et al., 2017; Berlin et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 1996; Cohen & Brook, 1995; Coley et al., 2014; Flouri & Midouhas, 2017; Grogan-Kaylor, 2004, 2005a; Gromoske & Maguire-Jack, 2012; Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Ma & Grogan-Kaylor, 2017; MacKenzie et al., 2015; Maguire-Jack et al., 2012; Maneta et al., 2017; Olson, Ewon Choe, & Sameroff, 2017; Olson et al., 2011; Pagani et al., 2004; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Piché et al., 2016; Stormshak et al., 2000; Weiss et al., 1992);

WHEREAS research has shown that children learn from the behavior modeled by parents, and therefore physical discipline may teach undesirable conflict resolution practices (Olson et al., 2011; Simons & Wurtele, 2010; Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Turns & Sibley, 2018; Zulauf et al., 2018);

WHEREAS there is evidence that physical discipline may escalate into injurious behavior that meets accepted criteria for abuse (Afifi, Mota, Sareen, & MacMillan, 2017; Durrant, Trocmé, Fallon, Milne, & Black, 2009; Lee, Grogan-Kaylor, & Berger, 2014; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff, & Runyan, 2008);

WHEREAS socially acceptable disciplinary goals of education, training, and socialization of children can be achieved without the use of physical discipline (Ateah, 2013; Beauchaine et al., 2005; Bugental et al., 2002; Burkhart et al., 2013; Canfield et al., 2015; Chavis et al., 2013; Dubowitz et al., 2009; Durrant et al., 2014; Gershoff et al., 2016; Gross et al., 2009; Holland & Holden, 2016; Knox et al., 2011; Leijten et al., 2017; Letarte et al., 2010; Love et al., 2005; Portwood et al., 2011; Puma et al., 2012; Scholer et al., 2010; St. George et al., 2006; Webster-Stratton et al., 2011);

WHEREAS children have a right to be treated with dignity and respect (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990; United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 2007); and

WHEREAS use of physical discipline is strongly predicted by parents' attitudes about it, which may arise from complex cultural identity issues, practices, and norms (Ateah & Durrant, 2005; Socolar & Stein, 1995; Vittrup, Holden, & Buck, 2006);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes that scientific evidence demonstrates the negative effects of physical discipline of children by caregivers and thereby recommends that caregivers use alternative forms of discipline that are associated with more positive outcomes for children.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA engage in competency-based public awareness, education, and accessible outreach activities to increase public knowledge about the effects of physical discipline on children and knowledge regarding alternative forms of discipline and their effectiveness and outcomes for children and parents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA engage in promoting culturally responsive professional training and accessible continuing education activities regarding alternative discipline strategies and their effectiveness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA support funding for research in the U.S. and other countries on:

- The factors that underlie parents' supportive attitudes about physical discipline;
- The factors that lead parents to rely on physical discipline;
- Differences in cultural understanding and values, including socially shared beliefs and norms of practice related to the use of physical discipline;
- The factors that promote parents' best practices in supporting their children, and in developing positive parent-child relationships with their children; and
- Interventions that may help to diminish parental reliance on physical discipline and enhance parents' access to culturally sensitive alternative approaches.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourage efforts to increase access to positive parenting supports for underserved groups.

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