

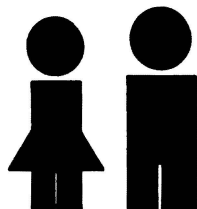
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Virginia State College  
Extension Program

Petersburg, Virginia 23803



FOCUS ON CHILDREN

### TO SPANK OR NOT TO SPANK

Many parents ask, "What's wrong with spanking?" It is not a question of whether spanking is right or wrong, but of whether spanking is an effective way to discipline children.

If discipline is thought of as helping children learn to behave in ways which are acceptable to parents and to society then spanking is not an effective way to discipline children.

There are several reasons why physical punishment is not recommended. First, there is always the danger that the child will suffer physical as well as psychological abuse. Spankings are usually administered in anger. In his rage, the parent may not realize how hard he is striking the child.

Second, spankings teach children to be evasive and deceptive. They learn not to let daddy or mother catch them doing whatever it was that caused the spanking.

Third, spankings make children feel that they are unworthy and

unloved. They damage the child's self-concept. Certainly children should not be spanked once they reach school-age.

Forth, children who have been spanked feel that they have paid for their misbehavior and are now free to misbehave again. In other words, spankings relieve the child of guilt feelings which are needed to prevent future misbehavior.

Fifth, spankings show the child that the parent thinks violence is appropriate when things don't go his way. Children imitate their parents' behavior. If parents spank, the child will be more likely to act aggressively toward others.

Sixth, spankings cease to be effective when the child becomes as tall and strong as the parent. Other methods of discipline will then have to be used.

There are better ways to discipline children if you want them to learn self-control. There are many helpful books in the library dealing with childrearing. Two

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good ones are How To Parent, by F. Dodson, and A Parents's Guide To Child Discipline, by Dreikurs and Grey. Why not learn more effective ways to discipline your children now? Don't wait until they are teen-agers.

If you do spank, then admit to yourself that spanking is more effective in relieving your frustration than it is in teaching the child self-discipline.

#### BED-WETTING: A PARENTAL CONCERN

The other day I happened to be riding on a bus. Seated in front of me were two mothers. One mother made the innocent comment that she had just purchased new bed sheets. "It was good sale," she said, "marked down 20%. Had to get them because our son still wets the bed." The other mother chimed in to ask how old her son was. "Why, he's four-and-a-half. I don't know what's wrong with him," replied the first mother. "His brothers and sisters were all staying dry during the night by the time they were three."

The second mother could hardly allow the first mother to finish her tale of woe when she jumped in with, "I thought I was the only one who had a child who wet the bed at age four."

On and on they talked. I began thinking about the people I have talked to about this topic and who have been upset in varying degrees. Unfortunately, in our culture matters dealing with elimination often are not talked about. Some adults feel uncomfortable discussing the subject even with a professional person. Other parents make every effort to hide the fact that junior or sis wets the bed. Often this feeling of shame is passed on to

the child.

When discussing the bed wetting concern, one must remember that every child, at some time, wets the bed. Many children have complete bladder control by the time they are four or four-and-a-half or five. If they don't very often they will have control during the day but not at night. Even children who go for weeks or months or years may once in a while urinate while they are involved in a game. A child just may get so engrossed in a game that he or she waits too long and can't get to the toilet in time. Regardless of when a child has the problem with bladder control, he or she needs a good deal of understanding. Otherwise, it's a good bet that the wetting problem will get worse.

Let's look a little closer at some of the reasons for wetting. If an older child, say around 5 or 6, rather continuously wets, then the first step should be to consult with a physician. A good practice is to get the child to the clinic or family doctor on a regular schedule. Many physicians suggest yearly physicals, unless a problem comes up in the meantime. If your child happens to be having a problem with wetting, call it to the physician's attention. He will examine the child for infections in the bladder or kidneys or for any other physically irritating condition. If the physician indicates that the child is physically sound then the reason for wetting probably is due to some emotional or social problem.

One mother and father kept telling their child she had a "bad habit." Well, this just made the problem much worse. The child was losing confidence and the harder she tried not to wet, the more she wet. And the more upset her par-

ents got. Another mother, with the best of intentions, was so concerned about the mattress being wet night after night, that she proceeded to put diapers on her six-year-old. He was a sharp little guy and could not understand why he had to sleep like a baby. The more she diapered him, the worse the problem became.

In order to remedy these situations, in each case only one basic thing was changed. In the first case the parent finally got to the point of not saying, "It's a bad habit." And in the other case, the mother purchased a vinyl or heavy plastic mattress cover and several pairs of training pants which were given to the child. These pants, incidentally, were not called "training pants" but rather, "nighttime pants."

Some parents do absolutely nothing to help the child or are too casual about the problem. "Oh, he'll outgrow it," they say when, in fact, there may be some circumstance that is keeping him from outgrowing it.

Try to think of ways to work with the child. For example, limit his or her liquid intake after supper. Is the bathroom, hallway or the child's room dark and scary to the child at night? Maybe he 's afraid to get up! Maybe the child sleeps in a top bunk and is afraid of falling off the ladder. Hence, he doesn't get up. Perhaps the child needs to be taken to the toilet each night at the same time. Try to figure out when the child wets, then get him or her up a half-hour before that time. Parents have to be faithful to the routine.

At other times there may be some emotional strain on the child.

Sometimes family quarrels or yelling at the child will cause bed wetting. At other times a parent who expects too much neatness or too many manners will cause the wetting. Even the presence of a new baby or a sick parent might cause it.

The point is there are some things, many things, that a parent can do to help the child. If this wetting is a concern in your family, think about the child--and you, the parents. Think about the whole situation. We need to guard against causing the child to have a feeling of helplessness or defeat, or that he has failed or should be ashamed. Keep in mind that the problem may be licked but the emotional damage or hurt, like feeling defeated or helpless, may be carried by the child into his adult life.

The child and the parents need an optimistic outlook. We need to think and convey the idea that the child can be helped and can, indeed, lick this problem. He or she needs encouragement, not a scolding or made to feel shame.

Check first the physical condition of the child with a physician. Then look at yourself, the child and the situation. What might be causing the wetting? And don't be afraid to try one thing or another. Each child is different and so are you.

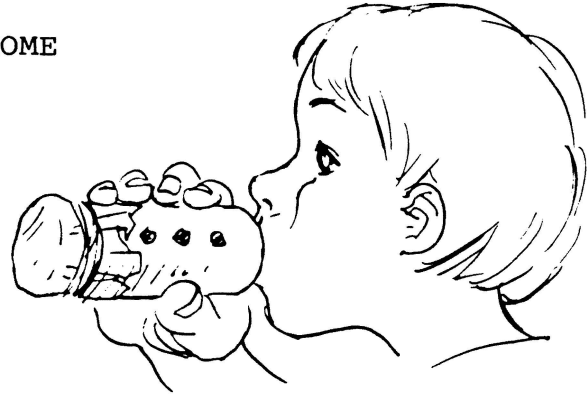
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## FUN AT HOME

## Humming Kazoo

Punch three holes in a short cardboard tube with a pencil. Cover one end with wax paper and hold in place with a rubber band. "Play" it by humming into the open end.



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