

“The health, productivity, and creativity of any society are the direct result of how the children of that society were treated.”

—Dr. Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph. D



the
Nurturing Center

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

STRONG FAMILIES BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES

Nonviolent Child Rearing

By Susan Christofferson

The Nurturing Center's goal is to ensure that each child has the right to be treated with respect and live in safety with secure, healthy, nurturing relationships.

One the most unforgettable memories I experienced as a young mother was in our pediatricians waiting room. I scheduled a well-child examine for my three year old son and with me in the waiting area was another young mother with a three year old and a toddler. At one point, as is predictable, the older child smacked the younger sibling. The mother smacked the older child and said “how many times have I told you it’s not nice to hit!” It seemed to me a perfect illustration of how not to be an effective parent. Yet surveys indicate that in our culture spanking and hitting young children is still a widely accepted practice. Despite the fact that extensive research tells us that children who are spanked are from two to six times more likely to be physically aggressive, to become juvenile delinquents, and later, as adults, to use physical violence against their spouses, parents still think it teaches respect. Based on studies of over nine thousand families in America, Dr. Murray Straus in his book titled, “Beating the Devil Out of Them, Corporal Punishment in American Families”, has found that: “Children who are spanked quickly learn that love and violence go hand in hand”. We are facing a huge problem of violence in our country and it is reflected in the very core values of where we live. Of the thousands of families Dr. Straus studied, he discovered that 95% of parents hit their toddlers. Since we know that young children imitate what they see and experience, what are we teaching when the most trusted adult in their life hits them for their own “good”? Discipline and punishment are defined differently. Discipline is about guiding your child’s behavior and teaching them what they need to know to become socially responsible. Punishment is about making children feel bad. Most adults resort to spanking because they don’t understand how children learn. Hitting creates fear as a motivating factor but does not help the child learn how to change their behavior. So why spank? Because it can work in the short run and parents may not know what to do instead. A parent must protect their children, understand how to set developmentally appropriate limits and teach children how to problem solve in order for them to be responsible, self-disciplined youth.