



September 2009

## Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

My message to you this month will be a short one, so that I can leave the space for Kathryn Kvols, who poses some useful ideas that may inspire you to look at some alternative suggestions to discipline. Obviously, they work just as well when trying to avoid shouting, pulling your hair out, and hiding under the bed for a moment of peace! Her ideas remind me of a book I use often in my training, *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Elaine Mazlish and Adele Faber. Consider as you read, that you will use these techniques slightly differently depending on the age of your child. Having said that, I find that my own teenagers require much the same kind of approach as the preschoolers in my school!

The article is insightful and practical and compliments our Montessori method well. I wish you the best of luck!

Heidi van Staden

### 9 Things to Do Instead of Spanking by Kathryn Kvols

Research confirms that many parents instinctively feel that they don't like to spank their children, but they don't know what else to do. The latest research from Dr. Murray Straus at the Family Research Laboratory affirms that spanking teaches children to use acts of aggression and violence to solve their problems. It only teaches and perpetuates more violence, the very thing that our society is so concerned about. This research further shows that children who have been spanked are more prone to low self-esteem, depression and accept lower paying jobs as adults. So, what do you do instead?

#### (1) Get Calm

If you feel angry and out of control and you want to spank or slap your child, leave the situation if you can. Calm down and get quiet. In that quiet time you will often find an alternative or solution to the problem. Sometimes parents lose it because they are under a lot of stress. If you can't leave the situation, then mentally step back and count to ten.

#### (2) Take Time for Yourself

Parents are more prone to use spanking when they haven't had any time to themselves and they feel depleted and hurried. So, it is important for parents to take time for themselves to exercise, read, take a walk or pray.

#### (3) Be Kind but Firm

Another frustrating situation where parents tend to spank is when their child hasn't listened to your repeated requests to behave. Finally, you spank to get your child to act appropriately. Another solution in these situations is to get down on your child level, make eye contact, touch him gently and tell him, in a short, kind but firm phrase, what it is you want him to do. For example, "I want you to play quietly."

#### (4) Give Choices

Giving your child a choice is an effective alternative to spanking. If she is playing with her food at the table, ask, "Would you like to stop playing with your food, or would you like to leave the table?" If the child continues to play with her food, you use kind but firm action by helping her down from the table. Then tell her that she can return to the table when she is ready to eat her food without playing in it.

#### (5) Use Logical Consequences

Consequences that are logically related to the behaviour help teach children responsibility. For example, your child breaks a neighbour's window and you punish him by spanking him. What does he learn about the situation? He may learn to never do that again, but he also learns that he needs to hide his mistakes, blame it on someone else, lie, or simply not get caught. He may decide that he is bad or he feels anger and revenge toward the parent who spanked him. When you spank a child, he may behave because he is afraid to get hit again. However, do you want your child to behave because he is afraid of you or because he respects you?

Compare that situation to a child who breaks a neighbour's window and his parent says, "I see you've broken the window, what will you do to repair it?" using a kind, but firm tone of voice. The child decides to mow the neighbour's lawn and wash his car several times to repay the cost of repairing the window. The child learns by this that mistakes are an inevitable part of life and it isn't so important that he made the mistake, but that he take the responsibility to repair the mistake. The focus is taken off the mistake and put on taking responsibility for repairing it. The child feels no anger or revenge toward his parent. And, most importantly, the child's self-esteem is not damaged.

#### (6) Do Make-ups

When children break agreements, parents tend to want to punish them. An alternative is to have your child do a make-up. A make-up is something that people do to put themselves back into integrity with the person that they broke the agreement with. For example, several boys were at a sleep-over at Larry's home. His father requested that they not leave the house after midnight. The boys broke their agreement. The father was angry and punished them by telling them that they couldn't have a sleep-over for two months. Larry and his friends became angry, sullen and uncooperative as the result of the punishment. The father realised what he had done. He apologised for punishing them and told them how betrayed he felt and discussed with the boys the importance of keeping their word. He then asked the boys for a make-up. They decided to cut the lumber that the father needed to have cut in the backyard. The boys became excited and enthusiastic about the project and later kept their word on future sleep-overs.

#### (7) Withdraw from Conflict

Children who are cheeky to parents may provoke a parent to slap. In this situation, it is best if you withdraw from the situation immediately. Do not leave the room in anger or in defeat. Calmly say, "I'll be in the next room when you want to talk more respectfully."

#### (8) Use Kind but Firm Action

Instead of smacking an infant's hand or bottom when she touches something she isn't supposed to, kindly but firmly pick her up and take her to the next room. Offer her a toy or another item to distract her and say, "You can try again later." You may have to take her out several times if she is persistent.

#### (9) Inform Children Ahead of Time

A child's temper tantrum can easily set a parent off. Children frequently throw tantrums when they feel uninformed or powerless in a situation. Instead of telling your child he has to leave his friends house at a moments notice, tell him that you will be leaving in five minutes. This allows the child to complete what he was in the process of doing.

*Kathryn Kvols is the author of the best selling book and parenting course, **Redirecting Children's Behavior**. She is an international speaker and the president of the International Network for Children and Families. She can be reached at 877-375-6498 or you can view other helpful articles at the website [www.incaf.com](http://www.incaf.com)*

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